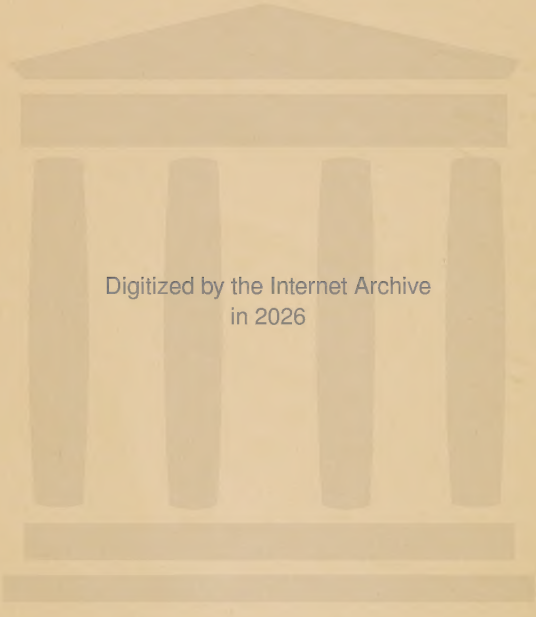

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/stbernardssermon0001prie_y4z3

ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

FOR THE

SEASONS & PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

" *For Beatrice when I looked to see,*
I saw instead a Senior at my side
Robed as the rest in glory. Joy benign
Glowed in his eye and o'er his cheek diffused,
With gestures such as spake a father's love.

. . . . . .

And thus the Senior, holy and revered :
' That thou at length mayst happily conclude
Thy voyage (to which end I was dispatched,
By supplication moved and holy love)
Let thy upsoaring vision range at large
This garden through : for so, by ray divine
Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount ;
And from heaven's Queen, whom fervent I adore,
All gracious aid defend us ; for that I
Am her own faithful Bernard.' "

—DANTE, *Parad.*, XXXI. (Cary's Translation).

Bernardus dei gra clarevallensis abbas nocavit

From Autograph preserved in the Archives of Ghent.

ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

FOR THE

SEASONS & PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN

BY

A PRIEST OF MOUNT MELLERAY

VOL. I.

ALMA COLLEGE
208.29
B459
Alma, California

BROWNE AND NOLAN, LIMITED
DUBLIN BELFAST CORK WATERFORD

3495

Nihil obstat:

FR. STANISLAUS HICKEY, O.C.R.,
Censor.

die 28ª Martii, 1921.

Imprimatur:

✠ FR. AUGUSTINUS MARRE,
Ep. t. Constant.
Abbas Generalis O.C.R

die 2ª Aprilis, 1921.

Nihil obstat:

GULIELMUS CANONICUS BYRNE, S.T.L.,
Censor deputatus.

Imprimi potest:

✠ BERNARDUS,
Episcopus Waterfordiensis
et Lismorensis.

WATERFORDIAE, die 1ª Aprilis, 1921.

To

HIS EMINENCE

Michael Cardinal Logue

ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH AND LORD PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND,
SUCCESSOR OF ST. PATRICK IN THE PRIMATIAL SEE,
COARB ALSO OF ST. MALACHY
WHO FIRST INTRODUCED INTO IRELAND THE CHILDREN OF
ST. BERNARD, ESTABLISHING THEM AT MELLIFONT,

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE SERMONS

OF THE ABBOT OF CLAIRVAUX

FOR THE SEASONS AND PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS
OF THE YEAR

IS HUMBLY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE very cordial reception given to the recently published Translation of St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles has encouraged me to make an extension of the programme outlined in the Preface to that work. According to the original design, the two volumes occupied with the Discourses on the Song of Solomon were to be followed by another containing the Homilies on Psalm XC, along with a number of selected Treatises. Now, however, instead of a third supplementary volume, I have decided to publish in three volumes a Translation of the Saint's Sermons "de Tempore" and "de Sanctis," under the title, "Sermons for the Seasons and the Principal Festivals of the Year."

These Discourses are somewhat less subtle perhaps than the Sermons on the Canticle, and less remote from the common ways of human thought and feeling; but they will be found equally solid and sublime, equally rich in Scriptural allusion, equally embellished with beautiful imagery. I think, therefore, that on the whole they will be more practically useful, and should have a wider appeal. In the Preface to his third tome (which comprises the Sermons "de

Tempore," " de Sanctis," and " de Diversis ") Mabillon says :—

" In the works of the holy Fathers it is usual to find that their Sermons or Homilies show less evidence of careful composition and appear to be less highly polished than the other monuments of their genius. The Abbot of Clairvaux, however, is an exception. It is his peculiar glory, or a glory which he shares with only very few, that his Sermons stand distinguished for the same energy of style, the same variety of sentiment, the same sublimity of thought, and the same tenderness of devotion, which characterise the rest of his writings. After much careful consideration, I have come to regard as the cause of this, not merely the force and vivacity of the holy Abbot's genius and his wonderful skill in elucidating points of doctrine and arousing the emotions, but also the very special character of the persons to whom his discourses were addressed. For the more ancient Fathers preached to people who required to be instructed in the rudiments of Christian faith and piety ; and therefore, consulting for the profit of their hearers, they prudently restricted themselves to the more elementary doctrines, and adopted a less elevated style, accommodated to the capacity of the simple. But St. Bernard was speaking to men already well grounded in the science of the saints and in the knowledge of Holy Scripture, many of whom had been illustrious in the world for their learning and rank ;

and it was natural that he should adapt his instructions to their moral and intellectual attainments. Hence it is that, not alone the magnificent Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, which were composed with unusual care, but likewise those for the seasons and festivals of the year, as well as the miscellaneous Discourses entitled 'de Diversis' (all included in this third tome) are wont to be preferred by men conspicuous for learning and piety to the Homilies of any of the other Fathers.

"Nor must it be supposed that this is merely my own private opinion of St. Bernard's Sermons: it is the deliberate judgment of scholars who have achieved high fame in literature, and who have expressed their conviction either in their writings or by word of mouth. I shall content myself with citing the testimony of two such witnesses. The first of these shall be Justus Lipsius. This eminent *littérateur*, in his forty-ninth Epistle, addressed to Albertus Miraeus, on the subject of sacred oratory, writes as follows: 'Amongst the Latin Fathers I am most charmed with Bernard, whose ardour and piquancy arouse the emotions, whilst his wise and wholesomely varied sentiments impress and inform the mind.' And so this illustrious scholar, after seeking diligently amongst all the Fathers for some one whom he could propose as a perfect model to students of sacred oratory, came to the conclusion that none was to be found equal

to Bernard, whom he consequently judged superior to all the other Latin Fathers. It will probably surprise the reader to learn that St. Bernard is adjudged to have carried off the palm for sacred eloquence, not only from the Latin, but also from the Greek Fathers, who have particularly excelled in this art. For myself, I confess that I should not have dared to put forward such an opinion, were I not supported by the authority of Henry Valois. In the Life of this most learned man, written by his worthy brother, Adrian Valois, we are told that for three or four years before his death, whenever sickness obliged him to remain at home, he would ask his attendant on Sundays and feast days to read aloud to him the Sermons of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, which he listened to with the greatest attention and devotion. He was of opinion, and he was accustomed to tell his friends, that the Lord's Day and other religious festivals should not be spent in literary pursuits, but should rather be devoted to the praises of God, and that the Sermons of St. Bernard are far more efficacious for touching our hearts and filling them with holy affections than the Discourses or Homilies of any other of the Fathers, whether Greek or Latin.

"To the testimony of these two witnesses, representing our own times, I might add the verdict of less modern writers, who have eulogised St. Bernard as a true apostolical Preacher. But from these I will only

single out one; and I think the preference should be given to Erasmus, a scholar much more inclined to censure than to praise. Nevertheless, he says of St. Bernard that 'his eloquence is more from nature than from art: his discourse is attractive and lively, and well calculated to arouse the affections.'"

Thus far Mabillon.

Amongst the things which most astonish us in the writings of St. Bernard is his extraordinary skill in the use of Holy Scripture. It is not so much his acquaintance with the text (although there can be little doubt that he knew the whole Bible by heart) as the unerring aptness with which he quotes it in almost every sentence, and the unsuspected mystical meanings which he can draw forth from the most familiar verses. In the words of his secretary and biographer, Geoffrey, "he quoted Scripture with such ease and relevancy that he seemed rather to precede than to follow it, and to lead it whither he would, because he had for his guide the Spirit of God, the Divine Author of Scripture." And Pope Leo XIII., of illustrious memory, in his Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus*, declares that "in the allegorical exposition of Scripture St. Bernard stands pre-eminent: his writings, it may be said, are Scripture throughout."

The suggestion has come from two very eminent sources that my Translation would be greatly improved by the addition of the Scriptural references. In some

respects, no doubt. But there are reasons to the contrary. It is not to any oversight that the omission is due, but to a deliberate purpose. Indeed I had intended at first to do what my kind correspondents advise, but was deterred by the consideration that the advantage to be gained would hardly compensate for the labour involved, and by the thought of the unattractive appearance presented by a book with columns of references on every page. Nevertheless, had the suggestion reached me in time, it would probably have been adopted.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Reviewers for the generous encouragement they have given me, and to express the hope that they will find this and the forthcoming volumes equally worthy of their kind commendation.

Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus,
January 16*th*, 1921 (*Kal. Cist.*).

CONTENTS

SERMONS FOR ADVENT

SERMON		PAGE
I.	On the Coming of Christ and the Circumstances which attended it	1
II.	On the Words of the Prophet Isaias to King Achaz	15
III.	On the Three Advents of the Lord, and the Seven Pillars which we ought to erect within us	22
IV.	On true and false Virtue, and that our Virtues must be modelled on the Virtues of Christ	32
V.	On the second and secret Advent, and how we are to keep the Words of Christ	40
VI.	On the Glorification of the Body, and how it must be merited	44
VII.	On our threefold need of Christ	51

ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER

	Author's Preface	53
I.		55
II.		68
III.		94
IV.		112

SERMONS ON PSALM XC

SERMON		PAGE
	AUTHOR'S PREFACE	133
I.	ON THE THREE CLASSES OF MEN WHO DWELL OUTSIDE THE AID OF THE MOST HIGH	136
II.	ON THE LORD'S CARE OF HIS ELECT	142
III.	ON THE SPIRITUAL SNARES AND HUNTERS, AND ON THE NECESSITY OF PENANCE AND FEAR	147
IV.	ON WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SHOULDERS OF GOD, AND ON THE FOUR BENEFITS WE RECEIVE UNDER THEM	155
V.	ON THE INEVITABLENESS OF TEMPTATION	161
VI.	ON THE FOUR TEMPTATIONS WHICH HAVE TO BE ENCOUNTERED BY EVERY SOUL AIMING AT PERFECTION	165
VII.	ON THE PROTECTION GIVEN TO THE JUST AT THE HOUR OF DEATH, ON THE MEANING OF THE RIGHT AND LEFT HAND, AND ON THE PREFERENCE WE OUGHT TO GIVE TO THE INTERESTS OF THE SOUL	174
VIII.	ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, AND ON THE REASONS WHY THE JUST SHALL REJOICE AT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE WICKED	195
IX.	ON THE ADVANTAGE OF LIVING FOR GOD ALONE, AND PUTTING ALL OUR HOPE IN HIM	210
X.	ON SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT, AND ON THE DELIVERANCE FROM BOTH WHICH THE RESURRECTION SHALL BRING US	222
XI.	ON THE WAYS OF MEN, THE WAYS OF DEMONS, THE WAYS OF THE HOLY ANGELS, AND THE WAYS OF THE LORD	231
XII.	ON GOD'S GOODNESS TO US, AND ON THE RESPECT, LOVE, GRATITUDE, AND CONFIDENCE DUE TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS	247

SERMON PAGE

XIII. On the four Vices of Obstinacy, Envy, Anger, and Pusillanimity 259

XIV. On God's fourfold Claim to our Gratitude, on the Devil's fourfold Temptation, and on the fourfold Virtue wherewith this must be encountered 267

XV. On the Insufficiency of Human and Angelic Protection, without the Divine, and on what is meant by knowing the Name of God 280

XVI. On holy Desires, and on the three great Benefits we must pray and hope for . 290

XVII. On the Value of Tribulation and on the Reward of the Just 297

SERMONS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

I. On the three Benefits which we owe to the Birth of Christ 309

II. On the Spiritual Jews and the Spiritual Jerusalem, and the Desire which all the Blessed feel for our Salvation . . 317

III. On the Three Days, the Three Watches, the Three Winds, and the Three Unions . 328

IV. On the Spiritual Riches which Christ brought on Earth 343

V. On the Manner in which we must prepare and sanctify ourselves for the Vision of God 357

VI. On the Manner in which each of us should make himself a Bethlehem of Juda, so that Christ may be born in his Soul . 366

SERMONS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

SERMON PAGE

I. On the Fountains of the Saviour . . 381

II. On the Three Principal Works of God, and the Special Virtue conspicuous in each . 390

III. On the Place, Time, and other circumstances of the Nativity 398

IV. On the Virtues commended to us by the Nativity 406

V. On Man's twofold Misery and the twofold Mercy of God, and on the Consolation which the poor find in the Nativity . 411

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

On the Three Kinds of Sanctity or Martyrdom, represented by St. Stephen, St. John Evangelist, and the Holy Innocents . 417

SERMONS FOR THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION

I. On the different Kinds of Circumcision; on the Name of Salvation, and the Three Witnesses 423

II. On the Manner in which the Name of Jesus has been poured out in the Saviour's other Titles 430

SERMON FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION

On the Eight mystical Days of the Soul's progress 435

St. Bernard's Hymn to the Name of Jesus . . 447

ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

FOR THE SEASONS AND THE PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS.

FIRST SERMON FOR ADVENT.

ON THE COMING OF CHRIST AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ATTENDED IT.

"*Behold I come.*"—Ps. xxxix. 8.

TO-DAY, my brethren, we celebrate the beginning of the season of advent. The name of this, as of all our other solemnities, is familiar enough and well known to the entire world. But perhaps the meaning of the name is not so generally understood. For the unhappy children of Adam, taken up as they are with the pursuit of things transitory and perishable, pay but little attention to what is salutary and true. "To what shall we liken" the men of this generation, "or to what shall we compare" them, those, I mean, who, as we see, cannot be drawn or weaned away from earthly and material consolations? They resemble persons who have suffered shipwreck and are now battling for their lives in the water. You know with what desperate tenacity such people cling to everything they chance to lay hold of and refuse, on any account, to

let it go, whatever it happens to be, even though it be something which cannot in the least help them to save themselves, for example, the roots of a plant, or some other such frail object. And should some of the witnesses of their peril venture forth to assist them, the drowning men are wont to clasp them so closely that they—the would-be rescuers—are rendered powerless to save either themselves or those whom they have come to succour. So do sinners perish in " this great sea which stretcheth wide its arms," so perish miserable mortals, because whilst they devote themselves to the pursuit of the unstable goods of nature and fortune, they lose the more solid goods of grace, by firmly clinging to which they would have escaped the danger and saved their souls. For it is not of vanity but of truth that the Saviour has promised, " You shall know it and it shall make you free." Do you, therefore, my brethren, to whom, as to His little ones, God reveals what is hidden from the wise and prudent, do you, I say, ponder well, in assiduous meditation, those things which are truly salutary, and diligently reflect on the meaning of this advent, asking yourselves, Who is He that comes ? whence does He come ? to what place does He come ? for what purpose does He come ? at what time does He come ? by what road does He come ? Such curiosity is evidently as commendable as it is wholesome. For the universal Church would not observe this season of advent with so much devotion unless she knew that some great and holy mystery lies hidden therein.

In the first place, therefore, let us also, like the Apostle, be overwhelmed with awe and admiration whilst we consider the infinite greatness of Him Whose coming we celebrate. For, according to the testimony

of the Angel Gabriel, He is the Son of the Most High, and consequently is Himself also Most High. It would be blasphemy to suppose the Son of God unworthy of His Father. So we must confess that the Father and the Son are equally exalted and one and the same in Majesty. Who does not know that the sons of princes are themselves princes and that the sons of kings are kings? Yet the question may be asked—why is it that of the Three Divine Persons Whom we believe, Whom we confess, Whom we adore in the Sovereign Trinity, it is not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son Who comes to us? To me it appears manifest that there must be some special reason for this. But "who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" So much at least is certain, that the coming of the Second Person was not decreed without a solemn counsel of the Most Blessed Trinity. And perhaps if we consider the cause of our banishment, we shall be able to understand in some degree how fitting it was that the Son especially should be our Deliverer. Lucifer, he who "arose in the morning," was instantly hurled down from the height of heaven, because he attempted as a usurper to make himself like to the Most High and as a robber would pretend to an equality with God, which is the exclusive prerogative of the Son. For the Father exercised His zeal in defence of the Son's glory, and by His action seemed to express what He afterwards spoke through His Prophet, "Revenge to Me, I will repay." Immediately that happened whereof Christ speaks when He says, "I saw Satan, as lightning, falling from heaven." What motive, then, hast thou for pride, thou who art but dust and ashes? If God has not spared

the proud princes of heaven, how much less will He spare pride in thee, a mass of rottenness and worms? Lucifer performed no criminal action, he was guilty of no evil deed, his only sin was a proud thought, and "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," he was precipitated down in irreparable ruin, because, as the Evangelist says, "He stood not in the truth."

Therefore, dearest brethren, keep far away from pride. Shun it, I beg of you, with all possible diligence, "for pride is the beginning of all sin," that pride which so swiftly overcast with a cloud of eternal darkness the glory of Lucifer, whose brightness had eclipsed the very stars of heaven, that pride which changed into demons not only an angel but the very first and highest of the angels. Hence, he at once grew envious of man, and the iniquity which he had conceived in himself he brought forth in our first parents, persuading them that, by tasting the forbidden fruit, they should become like God, knowing good and evil. O miserable one, what art thou promising them? What art thou holding out to their hope? It is not to thee but to the Son of the Most High that belongs the key of knowledge. Yea, He is Himself "the Key of David That openeth and no man shutteth." "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And wilt thou have the power and the impious daring to steal those treasures therefrom, in order that thou mayest deliver them to man? You thus perceive, my brethren, how Lucifer, according to the words of Christ, "is a liar and the father thereof." For he became a liar when he said, "I will be like the Most High," and the father of lies when he infused into man also the poisoned seed of his falsity, with the words, "You shall be as

gods." But thou too, O man, "if thou didst see the thief, thou didst run with him."

You have heard, my brethren, what was read to us from the Prophet Isaias in the office of vigils last night: "Thy princes are faithless, the companions of thieves," or, as it is read in another version:* "Thy princes are disobedient, the companions of thieves." In truth, Adam and Eve, who are our princes (*principes*), as being the first parents of our race, became 'disobedient and the companions of thieves" when, at the suggestion of the serpent, or rather of the devil in the serpent, they attempted to usurp the prerogative of the Son of God. Nor did the Father regard with indifference the dishonour done to His Son, "for the Father loveth the Son," as the Evangelist assures us. Rather He took summary vengeance on the transgressors, and instantly His hand commenced to weigh heavy upon us all. For we have all sinned in Adam, and in him likewise we have all received the sentence of condemnation. Now what will the Son do, seeing the Father full of zeal for His glory and sparing no creature to avenge the injury done it? "Behold," He seems to say, "the Father, on My account, has lost many of His intelligent creatures. The first of the angels ambitioned My Majesty, and he found many to support his pretensions. But the zeal of My Father wreaked instant and terrible vengeance upon him, smiting both him and his followers with an incurable plague, a most fearful chastisement. Man also endeavoured to usurp the knowledge which equally belongs to Me, and him, likewise, My Father punished without mercy, neither hath His eye spared

* He means the Septuagint Version which has: "*οἱ ἄρκοντές σου ἀπειθοῦσι, κοινωνοὶ κλεπτῶν.*"—(Translator.)

him. 'Doth God take care for oxen?' Only two orders of noble creatures has He made, endowed with the gift of understanding and with the capacity for eternal happiness, the angelic, namely, and the human. And lo! because of Me He has suffered the loss of many angels and of all men. Therefore that they 'may know that I love the Father,' He shall have restored to Him through Me those whom through Me—in some sense at least—He seems to have lost. 'Take me up,' then, ye despairing ones, 'and cast Me into the sea, for I know that for My sake this great tempest is upon you.'* All are envious of Me. Therefore, 'behold I come,' and I will show Myself to them in such a character that for all who may wish to envy Me, and for all who may strive to imitate Me, this envy and this emulation shall turn to their advantage. I know, nevertheless, that the apostate angels 'have passed into an affection of the heart' in 'malice and wickedness,' and that their sin has not the excuse of ignorance or infirmity. Consequently, as they refuse to repent, it is necessary that they perish. For the Father's affection as well as 'the honour of the King loveth judgment.'"†

It was, indeed, for this reason that God in the beginning created men, in order, namely, to fill up the places left vacant by the fall of the angels and to repair the ruins of the heavenly Jerusalem.‡ For He knew that

* Allusion to Jonas i. 12.—(Translator.)

† This is one of the three reasons assigned by St. Thomas to show how congruous it was that the Second Person should become incarnate rather than the First or Third (*Sum. Theol.*, III. q. iii. a. 8). For the other "congruities" or "conveniences" which theologians have discerned in the Incarnation of the Word, see Faber's *Bethlehem*, pp. 21-27.—(Translator.)

‡ This opinion seems to have been very common amongst the Fathers, and was even supposed to be implied in certain passages of Scripture. Thus the celebrated Peter Lombard, the "Master of the Sentences," says of it: "De homine quoque

for these rebellious spirits there was no possibility of a return to grace, being aware " of the pride of Moab, that he is exceeding proud," and that his pride does not admit the remedy of repentance, nor, consequently, the remedy of pardon. But when man also fell, He, the Creator, produced no new order of creatures to make good the loss. Thus He intimated that the human race was to be redeemed, because, as it had been seduced by a malice not its own, it could also be saved by a charity not its own. According to Thy merciful design, therefore, " be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me, for I am weak." Like Joseph " I was stolen away out of my native land, and here without any fault was cast into the dungeon." I do not pretend indeed to be absolutely innocent, I only claim a relative innocence: that my guilt is as nothing compared to the guilt of him who seduced me. He led me, O Lord, to assent to a lie. Let truth come, therefore, in order that his falsity may be exposed. So shall I know the truth and the truth shall make me free, if yet I renounce completely the lie when unmasked and cleave to the truth when ascertained. Were I to act otherwise, I should no longer be yielding to a human temptation, nor committing a human sin, but making

in Scriptura interdum reperitur quod factus sit propter reparationem angelicae ruinae." But, he adds, " quod non ita est intelligendum quasi non fuisset homo factus si non pecasset angelus, sed quia inter alias causas, scilicet, praecipuas, haec etiam nonnulla causa extitit." It is at the present time less generally held, because (amongst other reasons) of its apparent incompatibility with the doctrine maintained by Scotus and Suarez against St. Thomas, and now widely accepted, namely, that amongst the divine operations *ad extra* the Incarnation was decreed first and absolutely, as being the end and motive of all the others, so that even though the angels and man had remained faithful, Christ would still have taken flesh. Cf. Hurter, *Theol. dogm.*, vol. ii. 347-50.—(Translator.)

myself guilty of diabolical obstinacy. For to continue voluntarily in evil is the sin of the devil; and they who choose to imitate his perseverance in sin deserve to be his associates in everlasting perdition.

You have now heard, my brethren, Who it is that comes. Consider next whence He comes and whither: He comes from the Heart of God the Father into the womb of a Virgin Mother: He comes from the highest heavens to the lowest parts of the earth. What then? Are not we also under the necessity of living on the earth? Aye, and it will be a painful exile for us unless He consents to keep us company. For where can it be well with us without Him? Or with Him where can it be ill with us?* "What have I in heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart and the God That is my portion for ever." "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, (provided) Thou art with Me." Now, as I perceive, He descends to the earth, and even into hell, not however as a captive, but as one Who is "free among the dead." For "He is the Light (That) shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend It." Therefore, according to the words of David, His Soul was not left in hell, nor did His Body see corruption in the heart of the earth. For Christ "Who descended is the Same also That ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." Of Him it is written that "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil," and also that, "He hath

* "To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus is a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt thee."—*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II. ch. viii.

rejoiced as a giant to run His way: His going out is from the end of heaven, and His circuit even to the end thereof." Good reason, then, has the Apostle to cry out to us, saying, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the Right Hand of God." But he would have laboured in vain to lift our hearts to heaven, unless he could show us the Author of our salvation enthroned there. However, let us now pass on to consider the remaining points. For although the matter is extremely rich and abundant, the shortness of the time at our disposal will not allow us to deal with it at adequate length. To sum up the results of our enquiries so far: the question as to Who is He That comes, has brought before us a Majesty infinitely sublime and ineffable; and, when we lifted up our eyes to discover whence He comes, we beheld a road of immeasurable length, according to the testimony of Isaias, who, filled with the prophetic spirit, exclaimed, "Behold the name of the Lord cometh from afar"; finally, on considering whither He comes, we have been led to realise that most admirable but utterly incomprehensible loving-kindness whereby the infinite Majesty of God has honoured us by coming down into the gloomy abode of our prison.

Now who can doubt that there must be interests of paramount importance at stake when the Divine Majesty deigned to descend from an eminence so sublime to a place so unworthy? The object must surely be something great, since the mercy is so great, and the kindness so great, and so great too the charity. What, then, shall we say is the purpose for which the Son of the Most High has come down amongst us? For this is the question which, in the order I have proposed to follow, comes

next for discussion. Here, however, we shall not have far to seek for an answer, since the Lord Himself, by His words and actions, has clearly proclaimed the cause of His coming. He descended in haste from the heavenly hills to seek the one sheep of His hundred which had strayed from the fold: He came down for our sakes, in order that, more manifestly than before, "the mercies of the Lord might give praise to Him and His wonderful works to the children of men." Oh, how marvellous a condescension in God to come down from heaven in quest of man! And how great an honour to man so to be sought by God! Surely "though we should have a mind to glory" in such an honour "we shall not be foolish." Not that man seems to be anything as of himself, but because He Who made him has made so much of him. For all the riches and all the glory of the world, and whatever else it possesses which the human heart may desire, all this is little, yea, it is nothing at all in comparison with the honour of being sought after by God. O Lord, "what is a man that Thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him?"

Nevertheless, I should like to know the reason why He has come to us, and why did not we rather go to Him. For it is we who have need of Him, not He of us.* Thus, amongst men, it is not the custom of the rich to visit the poor, even when they wish to give them assistance. Such in truth is the case, my brethren: it were more fitting that we should go to Him than that He should come to us. But there were two obstacles which prevented our access. For, in the

* "Thou hast need of Me, not I of thee."—*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. IV. ch. xii.

first place, our eyes were weak and dim, whereas He "inhabiteth light inaccessible"; and, secondly, we were as the paralytic lying helpless in his bed, and could not by any means attain to the loftiness of the Divine Majesty. Therefore, our most benign Saviour, the tender Physician of our souls, descended from His throne on high and tempered His glory's splendour to the weakness of our vision. For He, "the Brightness of eternal Light," enclosed Himself in the lantern, so to speak, of that glorious, that most pure and spotless Flesh Which He took from a virgin mother, and which is manifestly signified by that most light and luminous cloud upon which, according to the prediction of Isaias, the Lord was to ascend, in order that He might come down into Egypt.*

I now proceed to the consideration of the time at which the Saviour made His advent. He came (as I am sure you do not need to be told) not at the beginning of the world's history, nor in the middle, but towards the end. This was not without good reason: it was a wise disposition of infinite Wisdom, Who, knowing how prone to ingratitude are the children of Adam, decreed to defer sending them succour until the time of their greatest necessity. It was then, indeed, "towards evening and the day (was) now far spent," since the Sun of Justice had almost disappeared from the gaze of mortals, and very little of His light or heat any longer reached the earth. I mean to say, the light of the knowledge of God had become exceedingly dim, and, whilst iniquity abounded, charity had lost its fervour and had grown cold. The angels had ceased to show themselves, and the prophets preached no longer. It

* Isaias xix. 1.

seemed as if they had given up in despair, frustrated in their efforts by the incredible hardness and obstinacy of men. It was then that the Son of God spoke to the Father, saying, " Behold I come." Thus, thus, O Lord, " while all things were in quiet silence, and night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty Word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne." The Apostle Paul is alluding to the same circumstance of the time when he says, " But when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son." For the fulness and plenty of the good things that belong to time had produced spiritual indigence, and even forgetfulness, as regards the goods of eternity. Opportunely, therefore, the eternal appeared to compete with the temporal at the moment when the latter had attained its fullest development.* For, to say nothing of other things, so great was the peace then prevailing amongst men, that at the bidding of a single ruler the whole world was enrolled.

You now understand, my brethren, Who it is That comes ; you know whence He comes and whither ; and you know also the time and the cause of His coming. Only one point more remains to be examined, namely, by what road does He come ? We must labour with all diligence to ascertain this, in order that (as is proper) we may be able to go forth to meet Him in the way. Now, just as He came once for all visibly and in the flesh to " work our salvation in the midst of earth," so He comes daily, in spirit and invisibly, to save indi-

* That is to say, the Son of God, in order to enhance the glory of His triumph over the world in the competition for human hearts, delayed to manifest Himself until temporal prosperity had attained its highest perfection. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. i. a. 4.—(Translator.)

vidual souls. Hence it is written, " A Spirit before our face is Christ the Lord." And to give us to understand that this spiritual advent is secret, the Prophet continues, " Under Thy shadow we shall live among the gentiles." It is therefore becoming, if the sick man cannot go forth any distance to meet so august a Physician, that he should at least show Him honour on His arrival by making an effort to raise his head and to sit up in his couch. There is no necessity for thee, O man, to cross the seas, or to penetrate the clouds, or to pass over the mountains. Thou art not invited to undertake any great journey. Even within thine own soul rise to meet thy God. For it is written : " The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Rise to welcome Him by compunction of the heart and by confession of the mouth, so that thou mayest issue forth in His honour, at least from the sink of thy miserable conscience ; for it would be a grievous crime to introduce hither the Author of all purity. So much concerning this spiritual advent of the Word, whereby He condescends to illumine with His invisible presence the soul of every one of us.

But it is also a delight for me to consider the road by which He came to us visibly, because " His ways are beautiful ways and all His paths are peaceful." " Behold," exclaims the Spouse in the Canticle, " behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills." Thou now seest Him coming to thee, O beautiful Bride of the Word ; but before thou couldst not discover Him, whilst He was reclining in repose. For thou didst say to Him, " Shew me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day." He reclines at ease where for endless

ages He pastures His flock of celestial spirits, feeding them with the vision of His own eternity and immutability. But, O beautiful one, be not ignorant of thyself and thy capacity. That vision which thou desirest " is become wonderful to thee, it is high and thou canst not reach to it." But behold, He has come forth from His holy place. He Who reclining feeds the angels, " He hath taken us and He will heal us." And He Who before could not be seen whilst reclining and feeding the angels, shall now be made manifest, visibly coming and visibly fed. " Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills." By these mountains and hills understand the prophets and apostles. And in what sense He came leaping and skipping you shall find explained in the " Book of generation," " Abraham begot Isaac, and Isaac begot Jacob," etc. From these mountains, as you shall see, grew out the root of Jesse, from which, according to the prediction of the Prophet Isaias, a rod came forth, and from the rod a flower, whereon the sevenfold Spirit hath rested. The same Prophet has declared this more explicitly in another place, where he says, " Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." For Him Whom before he called a Flower, he here calls Emmanuel, and the rod from which he said the Flower was to spring, he now explains to signify a virgin. However, the consideration of this most profound mystery must be postponed to another day ; for it is a subject that deserves a special sermon to itself, and besides, to-day's discourse has already been sufficiently prolonged.

SECOND SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On the Words of the Prophet Isaias to King Achaz.

"Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, either unto the depth of hell, or unto the height above. And Achaz said: I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord. And he said: Hear ye, therefore, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men that you are grievous to my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel. He shall eat butter and honey, that He may know to refuse evil and to choose the good."—Is. vii. 11-16.

My brethren, we have heard the Prophet urging King Achaz to "ask a sign of the Lord either unto the depth of hell or unto the height above." We have also heard the King's answer, vested indeed in the semblance of piety, but containing nothing of the virtue. For this reason he deserved to be rejected by Him Who seeth the heart, and to Whom "the thought of man confesseth." "I will not ask," he said, "and I will not tempt the Lord." The royal state and dignity had puffed him up with pride, and, being full of craft, he knew how to speak the words of human wisdom. Therefore, Isaias received from the Lord the command, "Go and say to that fox: Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God unto the depth of hell,"—by which is meant that although this crafty fox has his den of cunning deep down, yet even should he descend into hell, there is One Who "will catch the wise in their own craftiness." Again He commanded the Prophet, "Go and say to this bird: Ask thee a sign of the

Lord unto the height above." That is, this ambitious bird has built himself a nest on high; yet, even though he should ascend into heaven, he shall there find One Who "resisteth the proud," and Who, by His own might, tramples on the necks of the arrogant and high-minded. King Achaz, however, refuses to ask a sign either of God's exalted power, or of the incomprehensible profundity of His wisdom; and hence the Lord Himself promises to the house of David a sign of goodness and charity, so that those whom neither the exhibitions of power nor of wisdom could terrify may be attracted at least by the manifestation of love. Yet the words, "unto the depth of hell," may be taken, not unreasonably, to refer to this very charity of God, "greater than which no man hath," and which caused Him to die and to descend into hell for those whom He loved. According to this interpretation, Achaz is bidden, either to tremble at the Majesty of Him Who reigns on high, or else to respond to the charity of Him Who out of love descends into hell. Therefore, whosoever does not think of this Majesty with fear, and reflect on this charity with a return of love, is not only "grievous to men" but is "grievous to God also." "Because of this," the Prophet replies, "the Lord Himself shall give you a sign (in which both majesty and love shall be clearly revealed). Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." O Adam, flee not away from Him, because now He is "God with us." Tremble not, O man, and quake not so with terror on hearing the name of God, for now it is "God with us." God is with us in the likeness of the flesh. He is with us by identity of nature. For our sakes He

has come, and He has come as one of ourselves, "passible like unto us."

"He shall eat butter and honey," that is to say, He shall be a Little One, and shall be nourished with such food as is suitable for infants. "That He may know to refuse the evil and to choose the good." Here also, my brethren, just as in the case of the forbidden fruit, as in the case of the tree of transgression, we have good and evil presented for choice. But the second Adam makes a far wiser election than the first; for He chooses the good, and rejects the evil: not like him who "loved cursing and it came upon him, and he would not have a blessing and it was far from him." The words just preceding, "He shall eat butter and honey," indicate, as you may notice, the choice made by this Little One. Only let Him assist me now with His grace, so that I may be able to express worthily and intelligently the ideas which by Him have been suggested to my mind. There are two kinds of food made from the milk of the sheep, namely, butter and cheese. Butter is moist and oily, cheese is dry and hard. Well, therefore, does our Little One know how to choose, since He eats the butter and refuses the cheese. That hundredth sheep which, as the Gospel tells us, wandered from the fold, and in whose name the Psalmist sings, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," that sheep, my brethren, represents the human race which the loving-kind Shepherd comes in quest of, leaving His other ninety-nine sheep on the mountains. Now in this stray sheep there are two things to be considered: its nature, which, like butter, is sweet and good, and precious; and the corruption wrought in it by sin, of which cheese is a symbol. See therefore what an

admirable choice our Little One has made, assuming to Himself our nature, but without its sinful corruption. Of sinners you may remember to have read in the psalm, "Their heart is curdled like milk," because in them the "leaven of malice" and the curd of iniquity have corrupted the pure milk of their nature.

In the bee also there are two opposing properties. The sweetness of its honey is matched by the bitterness of its sting. But there is a Bee That "feedeth among the lilies," That lives in the flower-bedecked land of the angels. And because He loves the flowers, He flew down to the village of Nazareth, the very name of which signifies a flower; and coming to a sweet smelling blossom of perpetual virginity, thereon He lighted, thereon He remained. The honey and the sting of this Bee will not be forgotten by him who, with the Psalmist, sings "to the Lord mercy and judgment." Nevertheless, when He descended to us, He brought but the honey, leaving the sting behind. That is to say, the Word came to us bringing mercy without judgment. Hence, on one occasion, when the disciples urged Him to give command that a certain city, which had refused to admit Him, should be consumed by fire from heaven, He replied that "the Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save." This Bee of ours was then without any sting. He had in a manner laid it aside whilst He exercised mercy without judgment in the case of those who treated Him with so much cruelty and indignity. But, my brethren, "trust not in iniquity," sin not in hope. The time will come when our Bee shall resume His sting, aye, and with exceeding ferocity shall plunge it into the sinner's very vitals; "for neither doth the Father

judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son." Now, however, our Little One eateth butter and honey by uniting in Himself the divine mercy with the good of human nature, in such a way that He is made a true Man without any participation in human sin, and a God of mercy, dissembling judgment.

These observations, as I hope, have enabled you to understand what that rod is which was to "come forth out of the root of Jesse," and what the Flower Which was to "rise up out of his root," on Which, it was predicted, the Spirit of the Lord should rest. For the rod signifies Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and the Flower represents her Son. Truly a Flower is the Virgin's Child, "a Flower, white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands," a Flower on Which "the angels desire to look," a Flower Whose fragrance gives life to the dead, and, as He calls Himself, "the Flower of the field," not of the garden. For the field produces its flowers without the co-operation of man, unsown by human hand, unploughed, unprepared by human labour. Thus, my brethren, thus beyond a doubt, flourished the holy Virgin's womb; thus inviolate, thus intact and unspotted,* as a field of unfading greenness, it produced its divine Flower, a Flower Whose beauty shall never see corruption, the splendour of Whose glory shall never grow dim. O glorious Virgin! O Rod sublime "from the root of Jesse"! To what a dizzy height dost thou lift thy sacred crest! Even to Him Who sitteth on the throne, even to the Lord of Majesty! Yet this should not astonish us, seeing that thou hast

* "Sic inviolata, integra, et casta Mariae viscera." Compare this with the opening words of the beautiful anthem so often sung at Benediction in Cistercian churches: "Inviolata, integra, et casta es, Maria."—(Translator.)

struck so deep the roots of thy humility. O truly celestial plant, singularly holy, precious above all! Verily thou art the tree of life, which alone has been reputed worthy to bear the fruit of salvation. Thy craft has been exposed, O malignant serpent, thy deceit has been discovered. Two charges thou didst bring against thy Creator; thou didst slanderously accuse Him of falsehood and envy. With regard to both thou art now thyself convicted of lying. For they to whom thou didst say, "No, you shall not die the death," did die, as a matter of fact, shortly after, whilst "the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever." And, as touching the second charge, tell me now, if thou canst, what tree, or what fruit of any tree, could God out of envy have forbidden man, to whom He has not denied even this chosen tree "from the root of Jesse," or the noble Fruit Which crowns it? "He That spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things?"

You have already perceived, I suppose, that the Virgin herself is the royal road by which the Saviour came to us, issuing forth from her womb "as a Bridegroom from the bride-chamber." Therefore, my dearest brethren, walking faithfully in this way (concerning which I made some remarks in the preceding sermon also, if you remember), let us endeavour by it to ascend to Jesus, Who by the same has descended to us; let us strive, I say, to go by Mary to share His grace Who by Mary came to share our misery. Through thee, O most blessed One, Finder of grace, Mother of life, Mother of salvation, through thee let us have access to thy Son, so that through thee He may receive us Who was

given us through thee. Let thy integrity excuse before Him the foulness of our corruption; let thy humility, so pleasing to God, make amends and obtain pardon for our pride; let thy abounding charity cover the multitude of our sins; let thy glorious fecundity supply in our behalf for a fecundity of merit. O thou who art our Lady, our Mediatrix, and our Advocate, reconcile us to thy Son, commend us to thy Son, present us to thy Son. Grant, O most blessed One, by the grace thou has found, by the prerogative thou hast merited, by the mercy thou hast obtained, that He Who vouchsafed to make Himself, by thy consent and co-operation, a partaker of our poverty and infirmity, may make us by thy intercession partakers of His own glory and happiness, Jesus Christ, thy Son and our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

THIRD SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On the Three Advents of the Lord, and the Seven Pillars which we ought to erect within us.

"Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars."—Prov. ix. 1.

In this advent of Christ, my brethren, which we are now celebrating, I cannot think of the Person Who has come, without feeling overpowered in mind by the excellence of His Majesty; and when I consider who they are to whom He has come, I tremble with awe at the greatness of His condescension. The angels certainly must contemplate with astonishment so unheard of a wonder, beholding now beneath them Him Whom they have always worshipped and shall ever worship as their Overlord, thus manifestly "ascending and descending to the Son of man." Again, when I reflect on the object of His coming, I embrace as well as I can the immeasurable extent of His charity. And if, finally, I meditate on the manner in which He has come, I realise and acknowledge the dignity to which our human nature has been raised. For He Who has come is the Creator and Lord of the universe, He has come to men, He has come for the sake of men, He has come a man. But some one may here object and say: "How can He be said to have come Who has always been everywhere?" I answer in the words of the Evangelist, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not."

Therefore, when I speak of His coming, I do not mean that He began to be present where previously He was absent, but only that He made Himself manifest where before He had been concealed. Hence, in order to become visible to us, He even assumed our human nature, He Who in His Divinity "dwelleth in light inaccessible." Neither, assuredly, was it anything unbecoming the Creator's Majesty to appear in the form of that likeness of Himself which He had fashioned in the beginning, nor was it unworthy of God to be represented in an image to such as could not see Him in His own Divine Essence, so that He Who of old made man to His own image and likeness, might, at least as a man, become known to men.

Therefore, my brethren, once a year the universal Church makes a solemn commemoration of the advent of such Majesty, of such condescension, of such charity, yea, of such a glorification of the human race. Once a year—would to God it were once and for ever! That would be far better. For surely men must be strangely infatuated when they have the desire or the daring to occupy themselves with any other interest after the advent of so great a King, instead of forgetting everything else in His presence and devoting themselves exclusively to His service and worship. But not of all can be understood the words of the Psalmist, "They shall eructate the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness," for even to taste of this sweetness is not granted to all. And surely no one eructates what he has not tasted or what he has merely tasted. Eructation proceeds only from fulness and satiety. Therefore, men of worldly mind and worldly conduct, even though they celebrate the memory of

this manifestation of divine sweetness, do not eructate that memory, but observe these holy days simply from custom, without fervour, without devotion, or any feeling of tenderness. And what is still worse, they even make this commemoration of God's infinite condescension an occasion for indulging the desires of the natural man. Hence you may see them during this time sparing no pains to procure splendid garments and costly viands, as if, forsooth, Christ looks for these and such-like things on the day of His nativity, and is there more worthily received where these are more scrupulously offered. But attend to what He has said Himself, "With him that had a proud eye and an insatiable heart, I would not eat." "Why," He seems to ask, "art thou so solicitous to provide thyself with a rich dress against My birthday? So far from being pleased with such pride, I hold it in abhorrence. Wherefore all this anxiety to lay up such abundant supplies of food for Christmas-tide? The pleasures of the palate are not acceptable to Me, but rather offensive. Verily, thou must be of an 'insatiable heart,' making such elaborate preparations and for so long a time. The body surely does not require so many things, and would be contented with that which is plain and easily procured. Therefore, in thus celebrating My advent, thou honourest me with thy lips, but thy heart is far from Me. I am not the object of thy worship, for thy god is thy stomach and thy glory is in thy shame. Oh, how unhappy art thou in thus paying homage to bodily pleasure and the vanity of worldly glory! 'But happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'"

My brethren, "Be not emulous of evildoers, nor envy them that work iniquity." Consider rather their last

end, pity them from your hearts, and pray for all who "are overtaken in sin." It is only from ignorance of God that these miserable men have adopted such a manner of celebrating Christmas. For did they know the truth, they certainly would never provoke against them by their incredible folly the anger of the Lord of glory. But as for ourselves, my dearly beloved, we have not the excuse of ignorance. To every one who is here present I say, thou surely dost know Him. And if thou wert to answer that thou knowest Him not, thou shouldst be like to worldlings, a liar. For if thou hast no knowledge of Him, who then hath brought thee to this place, or how hast thou come hither? Didst thou not know Him, when wouldst thou have been persuaded to break so freely the bonds of natural love and friendship, to renounce the delights of the flesh and the vanities of the world, "to cast thy care upon the Lord," and to transfer all thy solicitude to Him, from Whom, as thine own conscience bears witness, thou hadst merited no favour but rather severe chastisement? What, I ask, could have induced thee to behave thus, if thou wert ignorant that "the Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him," unless thou also hadst known that "the Lord is sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy"? But how couldst thou have known this, if not because He not only came to thee, but even came into thee?

There are three distinct comings of the Lord of which I know, His coming *to* men, His coming *into* men, and His coming *against* men. He comes to all men indifferently, but comes not into all or against all. His coming to men and His coming against men are too

well known to need elucidation. But concerning the second advent, which is spiritual and invisible, listen to what He says Himself, "If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him." Blessed is the man with whom Thou, Lord Jesus, makest Thy abode! Blessed he in whom "Wisdom hath built herself a house, and hath hewn out her seven pillars"! Blessed is the soul which has become the seat of Wisdom! Shall I tell you whose this soul is? She is the soul of the just man. This is manifest from the words of David, "Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne." Is there any one amongst you, brethren, who desires to prepare a seat for Christ in his soul? Behold here the kind of silk and embroidery with which He requires that the cushion shall be covered. Justice is a virtue which inclines us to give everyone his due. Now there are three classes of persons in relation to whom this virtue must be exercised, thy superiors, thy inferiors, and thy equals. Render therefore to those above thee, to those beneath thee, and to those on a level with thee, that which thou owest to each, and so shalt thou worthily celebrate the advent of Christ, adorning His seat for Him with justice. Render, I say, to thy superiors obedience and reverence, of which the first relates to thy exterior, whilst the second belongs to the heart. For it is not enough to show ourselves externally obedient to those in authority, unless we also entertain feelings of respect and veneration for them in the interior of our souls. And even should the life of any superior be so notoriously wicked as to admit of no excuse or dissimulation, nevertheless, for God's sake, Who is the Source of all power,

we are bound to honour such a one, not on account of his personal merits, which are non-existent, but because of the divine ordination and the dignity of his office.

In like manner, the laws of fraternity and of human society give our brethren, amongst whom we live, a claim upon us for counsel and assistance. For we, on our side, desire that they should render us the same services, counsel to instruct our ignorance, assistance to support our weakness. But perchance there is some one here who is saying to himself in the silence of his heart, " What counsel can I give my brother, since I am not allowed to speak even one word to him without permission ? And how shall I assist him, who am not permitted to do anything whatever except under obedience ? " To this I answer, thou shalt never be in want of something to do so long as thou art not wanting in fraternal charity. In my judgment, there can be no better counsel than that which thou givest, when, by thy example thou dost strive to teach thy brother what is expedient for him to do and what to omit, urging him on to better things, and exhorting him " not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And what better or more efficacious assistance can be given him than to pray for him with fervour, to reprove him frankly for his faults,* to place no obstacle in his path, but on the contrary, like an angel of peace, to be solicitous to " gather out of the kingdom of God all scandals," as far as is possible, and to remove from his way every occasion of stumbling ? When thou showest thyself such a counsellor and such

* That is, by accusations in chapter : for, as the Saint has just remarked, no private religious was permitted to speak to another.—(Translator.)

a helper to thy brother, then, in truth, thou art rendering unto him that which thou owest, and he has no cause to complain of thee. But if, further, thou art invested with authority over anyone, to him beyond question thou owest a debt of greater solicitude. He claims from thee watchfulness and correction : watchfulness, which shall enable him to avoid sin, correction which shall allow no transgressions to remain unpunished. And even though none of thy brethren has been committed to thy charge, there is nevertheless, one that is subject to thee and that requires at thy hands the same watchfulness and zeal. I allude to thine own body, which undoubtedly has been given thee in order to be ruled by thy spirit. Thou art therefore obliged to watch over it so that " sin may not reign in it," and that its members may not become " instruments of iniquity." It has also a right to thy zealous correction, so that, chastised and reduced to servitude, it may "bring forth fruits worthy of penance." Yet far heavier and far more perilous is the responsibility which weighs upon him who has to render an account for many souls. " Unhappy man that I am," what shall I do or whither shall I flee, if I am found to have negligently guarded this immense treasure, this priceless deposit, which Christ has judged more precious than His own most precious Blood ? Had I collected the Blood of the Lord as It dripped and trickled from His Body on the cross, and had I retained It in my possession, sealed up in a vessel of glass, which I should be under the necessity of carrying about with me constantly, oh, how terrible would be my anxiety amidst so many dangers ! And yet, my brethren, I have been made custodian of something for which no imprudent Merchant,

yea, He Who is Wisdom Itself, did not hesitate to barter all that Blood. What is more, I am keeping "this treasure in earthen vessels," which seem to be exposed to perils greater and more numerous than vessels of glass. And further, to crown my solicitude and lest anything should be wanting to my fear, whilst I am obliged to watch over my own conscience and the consciences of my brethren, not one of these is sufficiently known to me. Each is to me an unfathomable abyss, a night of impenetrable darkness, and nevertheless I am charged with the custody of each, and the voice of the Lord is ever ringing in my ears, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" It is not lawful for me to reply with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" No, I can only humble myself and confess with the Prophet that "unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain who keepeth it." I shall, however, be held excused if, as I have said, I am faithful in the discharge of my twofold function of vigilance and correction.* And if I am found to have satisfied the other four obligations also, by showing obedience and reverence to my superiors, and by giving counsel and help to my equals then, as regards

* "Let the Abbot always bear in mind that he will have to render an account both of his preaching and of the obedience of his disciples at the dreadful tribunal of God. He should likewise remember that the shepherd is held responsible for any want of improvement his Master may observe in the sheep; and that he shall escape condemnation on the day of judgment only by showing that he had done his utmost to reform his unruly flock, and to apply the proper remedies for the cure of their diseases. Then indeed the shepherd, being acquitted at God's tribunal, can say with the Prophet 'I have not hid Thy justice within my heart; I have declared Thy truth and Thy salvation, but they have despised me.' And finally eternal death shall be the portion of his disobedient flock."—Holy Rule of St. Benedict, ch. ii. (Mount Melleray Translation).

justice at any rate, Wisdom shall not find her seat in my soul altogether unprepared.

And perhaps we have here six of the seven pillars which Wisdom "hath hewn her out" in the house which she hath "built herself." We must therefore endeavour to find the seventh also, if haply she herself will condescend to make it known to us. But as the six which we have discovered belong to justice, why should we not suppose the seventh to appertain to judgment? For not justice alone, but "justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne," O Lord. Besides, if we render what we owe to our superiors, to our equals, and to our inferiors, shall there be nothing for God? It is doubtless true that we can never discharge our debt to Him, because He has so abundantly multiplied His mercies upon us, because we have so often sinned against Him, because we are so weak and worthless, and because He is so rich in Himself and self-sufficing, "needing none of our goods." Nevertheless hear what is said by holy David, to whom He hath made manifest "the uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom": "The honour of the King," sings the Royal Prophet, "loveth judgment." So far as concerns Himself, there is nothing which He more strictly requires from us. Only let us confess our iniquities, and for the glory of His grace, He will justify us freely. For He loves the soul which is constantly examining herself in His sight and judging herself with sincerity. And it is only for our own sakes He exacts this judgment from us, because if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged. The wise man, consequently, will be watchful and suspicious of all his works, he will examine, scrutinise, and pass judgment

on everything; and he who thus endeavours truly to know and who humbly confesses the value set by truth on himself and his works, shows that he honours truth. But I shall give you a more evident proof that judgment is required of us after justice: "When you have done all things that are commanded you," so speaks the Saviour, "say: we are unprofitable servants." As regards ourselves, therefore, we may rest assured that we are worthily preparing a seat within us for the Lord of Majesty, when we are striving to observe all the commandments of His justice, and are at the same time judging ourselves to be unprofitable servants.

FOURTH SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On true and false Virtue and that our Virtues must be modelled on the Virtues of Christ.

"*Length of days is in* (*His*) *right hand, and in* (*His*) *left hand riches and glory.*"—Prov. iii. 16.

It is fitting, my brethren, that we should celebrate this season of advent with all possible devotion, rejoicing in so great a consolation, marvelling at so great a condescension, inflamed with love by so great a manifestation of charity. But let us not think of that advent only whereby the Son of man has "come to seek and to save that which was lost," but also of that other by which He will come again and will take us to Himself. Would to God you kept these two advents constantly in your thoughts, revolving them in assiduous meditation, pondering in your hearts how much we have received by the first, how much we are promised at the second! Would to God you were able thus to "sleep among the midst of lots"!* For these two comings of the Lord are the two arms of the Bridegroom, between which the Bride was sleeping when she said, "His Left Hand is under my head, and His

* "If you sleep among the midst of lots, you shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold" (Ps. lxvii. 14). This is one of the most difficult verses in the whole psalter. According to most commentators, to "sleep among the midst of lots" signifies to rest in the truth of the Old and New Testaments, or to devote oneself alternately to the exercises of the active and contemplative life, or to die between the hope of heavenly happiness and the contempt of worldly enjoyments. Cf. Bellarmin's Commentary.—(Translator.)

Right shall embrace me" ; because, as we read elsewhere, " Length of days is in (His) Right Hand, and in (His) Left Hand riches and glory." " In His Left Hand riches and glory," so speaks the inspired author of the Book of Proverbs. Attend to this, ye sons of Adam, slaves to avarice and ambition. What concern have you with earthly riches and temporal glory, which are neither solid nor subject to your dominion? Silver and gold! What are these but clay of the earth, coloured white and yellow, which the error of men alone makes, or rather reputes, of value? I say they are not subject to your dominion, for if they are, why, then, not take them away with you? But it is written of man, " When he shall die he shall take nothing away ; nor shall his glory descend with him."

Consequently, my brethren, true riches do not consist in the external goods of fortune, but in the virtues of the soul, which accompany the conscience to judgment and render us everlastingly wealthy. And with regard to glory, the Apostle writes, " Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." This indeed is true glory which comes from the Spirit of truth : " For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." But the glory which is given and received amongst men, who " seek not the glory which is from God alone," that is only vain glory, because the sons of men are vain. What a fool thou art who consignest thy money to a sack full of holes! who puttest thy treasure in the mouths of men!* Knowest thou not that this coffer is never closed and has no lock to secure it? How much wiser they who

* " The glory of men is in their own consciences, not in the mouths of others."—*Imitation of Christ,* Bk. II. ch. vi.

guard their treasure themselves and refuse to entrust it to others! But shall they keep it always concealed? Shall it be hidden for ever? No, surely not. The time will come when the hidden things of the heart shall be made manifest, and when that which was boastfully exhibited shall no longer appear. Hence it is that at the coming of the Bridegroom the lamps of the foolish virgins go out; hence too they who receive their reward from men are ignored by Christ. Wherefore I say to you, my dearest brethren, it is much more profitable to hide whatever of good we may seem to possess than to make a public display of it. Thus, when beggars solicit an alms, it is their custom to show, not splendid garments, but half-naked bodies, and sores or ulcers if they have them, in order that the heart of the beholder may more quickly be moved to mercy. This practice was observed much better by the publican of the Gospel than by the Pharisee, and therefore it was that "he went down to his house justified rather than the other."

My brethren, "the time is that judgment should begin at the house of God." What shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel? They that rise not in this judgment, what judgment shall they receive? Let me tell you: all whosoever are unwilling to be judged by this judgment which now is and in which "the prince of this world is cast out," must await or rather must fear the coming of the eternal Judge by Whom they shall themselves be cast out together with their prince. But as for us, let us now judge ourselves strictly, and then securely may "we look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His

glory." "Then shall the just shine," those who possessed little learning in this life being now as resplendent in glory as they that had greater; for they "shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." But "the light of (that) sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

The Saviour, when He comes, "will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His glory," only on condition, however, that He finds our hearts already reformed and made like to the humility of His own Heart. Therefore has He said, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of Heart." In connection herewith, I would have you take notice, my brethren, that there are two kinds of humility, the one appertaining to knowledge (or to the understanding), the other belonging to the affections (or to the will). It is this latter which Christ calls humility of the heart. By humility of the understanding we know that we are nothing; and we learn this humility from ourselves and from the experience of our own infirmity. Humility of the will, or of the heart, enables us to trample under foot the glory of the world; but it is only to be learned from Him Who "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," Who fled when the people desired to make Him King, and Who freely offered Himself when they wished to make Him suffer all kinds of ignominy and the shameful death of the cross. Therefore, if we desire to "sleep among the midst of lots," that is to say, if we would rest in security between the two comings of Christ, let our "wings be covered with silver," that is, let us express in our lives that form of the virtues which Christ, when present in the flesh, commended to us both by

word and example. For silver may be taken not unreasonably as symbolic of His Human Nature, just as gold is understood to represent His Divinity.

Accordingly, in as far as every virtue of ours falls short of the pattern given us by Christ, in so far does it fall short of true virtue: no wing that we possess is of any worth to bear us aloft unless it be covered with silver. A powerful wing is evangelical poverty, which enables us to fly speedily to the kingdom of heaven. Observe that the other virtues which follow in the Beatitudes obtain only a promise of this kingdom, to be fulfilled at a future time; but to poverty it is not so much promised as actually given. Hence the reason of the blessedness belonging to the poor is assigned in the present time, "For theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven"; whereas the future is employed in all the other instances, thus, "Blessed are the meek for they *shall* possess the land," "Blessed are they that mourn for they *shall* be comforted," and so on. But some even of the voluntary poor whom we meet with have not the true poverty beatified by Christ; because if they had they would not appear so downcast and disconsolate, as being truly kings, aye, kings of heaven. Such are those who desire indeed to be poor, yet on condition that they shall never want for anything; and they love poverty in such a manner that they will submit to no privation. There are others again who appear to be meek enough so long as there is nothing said or done except what is according to their liking; but on the slightest occasion, they will show how far they are from true meekness. How can such counterfeit meekness hope to inherit the land, since it does not survive to receive the inheritance? There are some also whom I see mourning; but if the

tears which flow from their eyes came really from their heart, they would not so easily and so speedily give place to laughter. As it is, however, whilst idle and jocose words issue forth in greater abundance than did the tears upon which they quickly follow, I cannot believe that it is to such tears the divine consolation has been promised, since unworthy consolation is so soon admitted. There are others still who manifest such ardent zeal against their neighbour's shortcomings that they might be supposed to "hunger and thirst after justice," if only they appeared to judge their own failings with the same rigorous severity. But, as a matter of fact, they do not weigh others in the same balance as themselves, and "diverse weights are an abomination before the Lord." For whilst with equal impudence and futility they are pouring out their anger upon their brother, they are also just as foolishly and just as idly commending themselves.

Some, too, there are who can be very merciful in regard to things with which they have no concern, who are scandalised if all are not abundantly provided for, yet so that they themselves are made to suffer no inconvenience, even the smallest. Now if such persons would be truly merciful, they ought to exercise mercy at their own expense. And if they cannot show mercy by giving alms out of their earthly substance, they should at any rate grant pardon with a good will to all who may seem to have offended them. They should give the pleasant look and the kind word—which is better than any gift—in order to soften the hearts of their enemies and to bring them to repentance. Moreover, they should give the alms of their compassion and their prayer not only to such as injure them, but

likewise to all whom they know to be in a state of sin; otherwise, their mercifulness is a mere pretence, and shall not avail to obtain mercy. We may also meet with some who confess their sins in such a way as to lead one to think that they are influenced solely by the desire of purifying their hearts, for confession is a laver in which all things are made clean. And yet the fact that they cannot bear to be accused by others of the very faults of which they voluntarily accuse themselves shows that such is not the case. Were they really as anxious as they seem to be cleansed of their stains, instead of feeling irritated, they would rather feel thankful to those who point out to them their failings. And finally there are people who, when they see another scandalised even in the least particular, are filled with anxiety, studying how they can restore him to peace; and so they appear to be peace-makers. Yet when something is said or done which seems to give offence to themselves, it takes more time and trouble to calm their own agitation than that of anybody else.* But evidently, if they had a true love of peace, they would seek it for themselves as much as for their neighbours.

Therefore, my brethren, let us silver our wings in the life of Christ, just as the holy martyrs "have washed their robes" in the Blood of His passion. Let us imitate, as best we can, Him Who loved poverty to such a degree that, although "in His Hand are all the ends of the earth," He yet "had not where to lay His Head," so that the disciples who followed Him (so we read), as they went through the corn-fields, compelled by hunger, "plucked the ears and did eat,

* "Thou canst also give good advice and encourage others with thy words; but when any unexpected trouble comes to knock at thy door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee." —*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III. ch. lvii.

rubbing them in their hands." Let us imitate the meekness of Him Who was "led as a sheep to the slaughter" and was "dumb as a lamb before His shearer and opened not His Mouth." Let us imitate Him Who wept over Lazarus and over Jerusalem, and Who passed whole nights "in the prayer of God," but Who is nowhere said to have laughed or jested.* Let us imitate Him Who so hungered and thirsted after justice that, although He had no sins of His own, He nevertheless exacted from Himself so terrible a satisfaction for ours, and on the cross thirsted for nothing else but justice. Let us imitate Him Who refused not to die for His enemies, Who prayed for His executioners, Who, though "He did no sin," listened with patience when falsely accused, and Who endured such torments in order to reconcile sinners to Himself.

* Similarly St. John Chrysostom (Homily 14 on 1 Tim.); "Thou laughest and givest thyself up to mirth: thou, who art a monk by profession, who art crucified, who oughtest rather to weep, thou laughest! Tell me, pray, when did Christ ever act thus? Thou hast never heard of it, but thou hast often read of His being sad. He wept on beholding Jerusalem, He was troubled at the thought of Judas's treachery, He shed tears when about to call Lazarus from the tomb: and dost thou give way to laughter?" St. Bernard probably owed his strict views on jesting to the teaching of his master, St. Benedict, who says in chapter vi. of his Rule, "But as to jests (*scurrilitates* = buffoonery) or idle and jocose words, we utterly condemn them, and forbid the brethren to utter a single word of this kind, under any circumstances." Yet the Mellifluous Doctor could appreciate innocent pleasantries. Replying to a facetious epistle sent him by Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, he says (Ep. ccxxviii.): "And so thou art pleased to be jocular. Thou art indeed very condescending and sociable. . . . Thy letter was most welcome. I read it with avidity, I read it a second time with renewed pleasure, I read it over and over again and always with fresh delight. The humour (*jocus*), I confess, pleased me very much. It charms by its gracefulness, without offending against decorum. I know not how, with all thy jesting, thou canst still 'dispose thy words in judgment,' so that thy humour detracts nothing from thy dignity, and thy dignity is no obstacle to the sprightliness of thy wit."—(Translator.)

FIFTH SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On the second and secret Advent, and how we are to keep the Words of Christ.

' If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him."—John xiv. 23.

In my last sermon I told you, my brethren, that they who have covered their wings with silver must " sleep among the midst of lots." I explained these lots to mean the two advents of Christ, but said nothing concerning the place of sleeping between them. This intermediate place is in fact another advent wherein such as have knowledge thereof enjoy a most pleasant repose. For whereas the other two are known to all, this is secret. In the first " He (Christ) was seen on earth and conversed with men," when, as He Himself bears witness, " they both saw and hated " Him. In the last " all flesh shall see the Salvation of God," and " they shall look on Him Whom they pierced." But in that which intervenes He is hidden, visible only to the elect who see Him in themselves, and so their souls are saved. Therefore, in the first He came in the flesh and in weakness, in the second He comes in spirit and in virtue, and in the third He shall come in glory and majesty. For it is through virtue that glory is reached, as the Psalmist sings, " The Lord of virtues, He is the King of glory." And similarly, the same Prophet says in another place, " In the sanctuary I have come before Thee, to see Thy virtue and Thy

glory." Thus, this intermediate advent is the way, so to speak, by which we must travel from the first to the last. In the first Christ was our Redemption, in the third He shall appear as our Life, whilst in this second He is our Repose and our Consolation, so that we may "sleep among the midst of lots."

But perhaps what I have been saying about the middle advent may seem fanciful to some of you. Listen, therefore, to the words of Christ Himself, "If any one love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him." But how are we to understand the statement, "If any one love Me, he will keep My words"? For I have read elsewhere in Holy Scripture, "He that feareth God will do good." It appears evident to me that something greater than this effect of fear is affirmed of him who loves, when it is said that he will keep the words of Christ. Where, then, are these words to be kept? Doubtless in the heart, as the Psalmist declares, "Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." But in what manner are they to be kept in the heart? Shall we say that it is enough to preserve the memory of them? But to those who keep them in this way the Apostle gives warning that mere "knowledge puffeth up." Besides, the records of memory are so easily blotted out by oblivion. Keep the word of God in the same way in which the food of thy body can be best preserved; for it is a living bread and the food of thy soul. Material bread, whilst it is kept in the cupboard may be stolen by thieves, or nibbled by mice, or may become stale and unfit for use. But once it has been assimilated, we have nothing further to fear from such

possibilities. It is thus we should keep the word of God, for " blessed are they who keep it " so. Receive this spiritual bread, therefore, into the stomach of your minds, and having been there properly digested, let it be transmitted thence to the affections and the will. Do not forget (like David) to eat thy bread, lest thy heart (like his) should wither, but nourish thyself therewith that thy soul may be filled " as with marrow and fatness."

My brethren, if you thus keep the word of God, there can be no doubt that it, in turn, shall keep you. For the Son will come to you with the Father, the great Prophet will come to you to rebuild the Jerusalem of your souls and to make all things new. This is the work which the second advent shall accomplish, " that as we have borne the image of the earthly " so may we " bear the image of the heavenly (man)." Just as the old Adam had diffused himself throughout the entire man and had occupied him wholly, in the same way the whole man has passed into the possession of Christ, Who created him wholly, redeemed him wholly, and will glorify him wholly ; for it is He Who " hath made the whole man sound on the Sabbath day." That old man, my brethren, dwelt in us formerly, that ancient prevaricator lived in every one of us ; we had him in our hands, and in our mouths, and in our hearts. He manifested himself through our hands, in two ways, viz., by deeds of violence, and by deeds of shame. In two ways also was he present in our mouths, in arrogant speeches and in words of detraction. And in our hearts similarly his presence was twofold, in carnal desires and in desires of earthly glory. But now for all who have been made new creatures in Christ, " the former things

are passed away." For in their hands innocence has succeeded to violence, continence to turpitude ; in their mouths arrogance has given place to humble confession, detraction to the language of edification, so that, according to the words of Anna, " old matters have departed from their mouths " ; in their hearts, likewise, charity has extinguished the desires of the flesh, humility the love of human greatness. And consider now whether Christ, the Word of God, is not received according to these three ways, viz., in the hand, in the mouth, and in the heart, by each of His elect, to whom He said, " Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm," and in another place, " The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart."

SIXTH SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On the Glorification of the Body, and how it must be merited.

"*We look for a Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory.*" —Phil. iii. 20-21.

Brethren, I would not have you to be in ignorance of the time of your visitation, or of the special object which the Divinity has in view in coming to you now. For the present is the time appointed for attending to the interests, not of the body, but of the soul; since the soul, being far nobler than the body, has in virtue of this natural superiority the first claim on our solicitude. Besides, that which was the first to fall should also be the first to be raised up. Now it was the soul that, having first brought corruption on herself by sin, brought corruption on the body also as a punishment. Furthermore, if we desire to be found true members of Christ, it is manifest that we must imitate our Head. Hence our first attention must be devoted to the purification of our souls, for the sake of which He has come to us and whose corruption He has first endeavoured to heal. But as for our bodies, let us postpone all concern for these to that time and to that occasion when He shall come again for the purpose of reforming them, as the Apostle assures us, where he says, "We look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His glory." Hence, at the time of the

first coming, St. John Baptist, who seemed to be, and in truth was, the herald of the Saviour, cried aloud, " Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world." Notice how he does not say " Who taketh away the diseases of the body," or " the afflictions of the flesh," but, " Who taketh away sin," which is a malady of the soul and a corruption of the mind. " Behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world." Whence, do you ask ? From the hand, from the eye, from the neck, even from the flesh itself, in which it is deeply rooted.

He taketh away sin from our hands, by cleansing us from the crimes we have committed ; from our eyes, by purifying the mind's intention ; from our necks, by removing the galling yoke of spiritual tyranny, according to what is written, " The yoke of their burden and the sceptre of their oppressor Thou hast overcome, as in the day of Madian," and again, " The yoke shall putrefy at the presence of the oil." And with regard to the flesh, the Apostle, writing to the Romans, says, " Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies," and in another place, " I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good," and also, " Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death " ? For he knew well that he could not be without that most baneful root which is implanted in our flesh, that law of sin which is in our members, until his soul was separated from his body, Therefore he desired " to be dissolved and to be with Christ," knowing that sin, which " maketh a division between God and us," cannot be completely taken away so long as we are imprisoned in the flesh. You have read of one whom the Lord

delivered from the power of the devil, how the demon went out of him at the divine command, casting him down and "greatly tearing him." I say to you, that this kind of sin—I mean carnal appetites and evil desires which so often assail us—can indeed and ought to be kept down by the grace of God, so far as this, that it shall not reign in us, and that we shall not yield our members unto it "as instruments of iniquity,"—and so there shall be "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"; but that it cannot be cast out except by death, when we shall be so "greatly torn" that our souls shall be parted from our bodies.

I have now explained to you, my brethren, the purpose of Christ's coming, and I have told you what should be the great object of the Christian's solicitude. Wherefore, do not, O body, do not, I pray thee, anticipate thy time. For although thou hast the power to hinder the salvation of the soul, thou canst do absolutely nothing to secure thine own. "All things have their season," as the Wise Man says. Permit the soul now to work for her own interests, or rather do thou co-operate with her, because if thou sufferest with her, thou shalt also reign with her. On the other hand, by impeding her restoration thou wouldst be impeding thine own in the same proportion. For thou canst not be perfected until the Creator beholds His image restored in her. O mortal flesh, noble is the guest whom thou art entertaining, yea, very noble, and on her welfare thine own entirely depends. Honour thy guest so distinguished. Thou art residing here in thy native country, but the soul, which has taken lodging with thee, is a pilgrim and an

exile on the earth. Where, I ask thee, is the peasant who, if some powerful nobleman wished to spend the night under his roof, would not gladly (as is only proper) place his best bed at the service of his guest even though he should himself have to sleep in some corner of the house, under the stairs, or on the very hearth-stone? Therefore, "go and do thou in like manner." Do not consider the sufferings and inconveniences thou mayest have to endure, provided thy guest can be honourably lodged with thee. Esteem it as thy greatest honour to be stripped of all honour in this life for the sake of the soul.

And lest thou shouldst perhaps feel tempted to despise or to undervalue this guest of thine, for that she seems to thee a stranger and a pilgrim, consider diligently the many precious advantages which thou owest to her presence. For it is she that gives sight to thine eyes and hearing to thine ears; it is from her thy tongue borrows its power of speech, thy palate its discernment of taste, and all thy members their various motions. Whatever of life, whatever of sense or feeling, whatever of beauty thou possessest in thyself, know that it is all the benefit of thy guest. It is only her departure from thee that will show how much thou owest to her presence. For as soon as the soul withdraws, the tongue shall be silent, the eyes shall become blind, the ears shall lose their hearing, pallor shall overspread the countenance, the whole body shall grow rigid, and after a brief interval shall be changed into a sink of corruption, all its beauty being converted to rottenness. And wilt thou, then, O body, wound and grieve this guest for the sake of any temporal delight whatever, which thou couldst not even enjoy except

through her? Besides, if even now, in the time of her banishment, when exiled for her sins from the presence of her Maker, she bestows upon thee such a multitude of benefits, what shall she not do for thee, after she has been restored to favour? Be careful, then, oh, be careful not to hinder that reconciliation, since from it thou shalt thyself derive a generous endowment of glory. Expose thyself with patience, nay, with gladness, to all kinds of sufferings and privations. Refuse no sacrifice which may seem to conduce to so happy a restoration. Speak to thy guest in the words of Joseph to his fellow-captive, "The Lord will remember thee and will restore thee to thy former place. Only remember me when it shall be well with thee."

Yes, she will undoubtedly be mindful to render thee good, if meanwhile thou dost faithfully serve her. And when she comes into the presence of her Lord, she will speak to Him of thee. Out of gratitude for thy hospitality she will plead thy cause with Him, saying, "When Thy servant was an exile, in punishment for her sin, a poor fellow-servant with whom I lodged treated me with great kindness, and I pray that my Lord may be pleased to make him a return in my behalf. For, in the first place, he sacrificed all he possessed in my service, and then his very self, not sparing anything of his own, in order to further my interests, 'in labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.'" What, then, will the Lord do? Surely, the Scripture does not lie when it says, "He will do the will of them that fear Him and He will hear their prayer." Oh, if thou couldst only taste this sweetness, if only thou couldst conceive this glory whereof I am

about to speak! For what I shall say is in very truth strange and astonishing, yet none the less certain and indubitable to faithful souls. He Himself, the Lord God of Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts and the King of Glory, He will Himself come down to reform our bodies and to make them like to the Body of His brightness! Oh, how great shall be that glory, how unspeakable that exultation, when the Creator of the universe, Who before came hidden and humble for the purpose of justifying souls, comes now visible and sublime to glorify thee, O flesh, so poor at present and so miserable; comes not in weakness as of old, but in all the splendour of His Majesty! "Who shall be able to think of the day of (this) coming" of the Lord, when He will descend in the fulness of His glory, preceded by the angels, who with the sound of the trumpet shall "raise up the needy (body) from the dust," "taking it up together with them into the clouds to meet Christ, into the air."

Shall we therefore continue to allow this flesh of ours, this miserable, foolish, blind, and senseless flesh, this utterly infatuated flesh, to seek after earthly and transitory consolations, or rather desolations, with the risk of being rejected and judged unworthy of that glory, and of being condemned besides to suffer inexpressible torments for all eternity? Let it not be so, I beseech you, brethren, let it not be so. Rather let our spirits find their delight in holy meditations, and let our flesh rest in hope, whilst "we look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His glory." For so the Psalmist sings, "For Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my flesh, oh, how many ways!"

Thus did the soul of the Royal Prophet yearn for the first advent, whereby she knew that she was to be redeemed; and with much greater eagerness did his flesh look forward to the final coming, at which shall be accomplished its glorification. For then all our desires shall be satisfied, and the whole earth shall be filled with the Majesty of the Lord. To this glory, to this happiness, to this "peace which surpasseth all understanding," may He bring us by His mercy and not "confound us in our expectation," the Saviour Whom we look for, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SEVENTH SERMON FOR ADVENT.

On our threefold need of Christ.

"If God be for us, who is against us?"—Rom. viii. 31.

My brethren, if we celebrate with devotion the advent of the Lord, we are doing nothing more than our duty, because not only has He come to us, but He has come also for our sakes, He Who "hath no need of our goods." Yea, rather it was our need of Him that induced Him to visit us, and the greatness of that need is clearly indicated by the greatness of His condescension. And just as the gravity of the disease may be inferred from the costliness of the medicine employed for its cure, so too may we ascertain the number of our ailments from the multitude of the remedies provided for us. For wherefore the "divisions of graces," unless they correspond to a variety of necessities? It would be a difficult undertaking to attempt to discuss in one sermon all the spiritual wants which we experience; but there are three which now occur to my mind, which are common to all, and which may be regarded as the principal. For there is not a soul amongst us that does not sometimes feel the need of counsel, of help, and of protection. It is indubitable that the whole human race labours under a threefold misery, a triple burden, which painfully oppresses every man so long as he lives in this region of the shadow of death, subject to the infirmities of the flesh and the assaults of temptation. For we are easily

led astray ; we soon weary of labour ; we quickly yield to violence. We are deceived when we try to discern between good and evil ; we faint and give up as often as we undertake a good work ; if we endeavour to resist evil, we are promptly cast down and overcome.

Very necessary, therefore, is the advent of the Saviour ; very necessary is the presence of Christ to men so encompassed with dangers. God grant that He may not only come to us, but that He may also in His infinite mercy dwell in us by faith to illumine our blindness ; remain with us by His grace to assist our utter impotence ; and stand by us with His power to protect and defend our fragility ! For if He dwells in us, who shall seduce us ? If He remains with us, surely we " can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth" us. If He " be for us who is against us " ? He is a faithful Counsellor, Who never can deceive us or be deceived ; He is a strong Helper, Whom labour never wearies ; He is a mighty Protector, Who will speedily enable us to trample under foot the power of Satan and will bring to naught all his cunning machinations. For He is the Wisdom of God, Who is ever ready to instruct the ignorant ; and He is the Power of God, to Whom it is easy to strengthen the fainting and to rescue the perishing. Therefore, my brethren, in all doubts and perplexities, let us have recourse to so wise a Master ; in all our undertakings, let us invoke the assistance of so powerful a Helper ; in our every combat let us commit our souls to the keeping of so faithful a Protector, Who for this purpose has come into the world, that, living here in men, with men, and for men, He may illuminate their darkness, lighten their labours, and guard them from all danger. Amen.

ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I HAVE long felt a wish to write something in order to satisfy my devotion to the Mother of God, but the multiplicity of my occupations has so far proved a hindrance. At present, however, being prevented by bodily illness from joining in the community exercises, I am able to enjoy a little leisure, which, eked out by what I can subtract from my night's repose, I shall endeavour to turn to the best account. It is therefore with feelings of pleasure that I take in hand that work especially which has been often in my thoughts, namely, the composition of sermons in praise of the Virgin Mother, as a commentary on those verses of the Gospel wherein St. Luke tells the story of the Annunciation. And although this is not rendered imperative on me by any necessity of my brethren,

* These Homilies were composed in or about the year 1125, immediately after the *Treatise De Gradibus Humilitatis*, the first of the Saint's published works. Certain views expressed in them seem to have excited a good deal of unfavourable comment, particularly the opinion that God's design to become incarnate in Mary was revealed to none of the angels (except Gabriel) sooner than to the Virgin herself. In his Tract on Baptism, ch. v. (which was written in answer to questions put him by the celebrated Hugh of St. Victor) St. Bernard successfully defends his position.—(Translator.)

whose advancement in virtue I am bound to promote, nor even recommended by any hope of benefiting them particularly, even so, they will have no right (at least such is my opinion) to complain of me for indulging my own devotion, provided that whilst doing so I shall be found no less ready and willing to attend to the wants of each of them.

FIRST SERMON ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

" The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,
" To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David : and the virgin's name was Mary."—Luke i. 26-27.

Why, it may be asked, does the Evangelist in this passage mention by their proper names so many persons and places, and that with such evident deliberation ? It is, I believe, because he wishes to remind us of the attention with which we should peruse what he is chronicling so carefully. He names the messenger who is sent, the Lord Who sends him, the Virgin to whom he is sent, and even the spouse of the Virgin. He also designates by their proper names the family of both spouses, their city, and their country. Wherefore this ? Shall we suppose that the inspired author has set down anything without special signification ? Surely not. For if a leaf falls not from the tree without cause, if a sparrow does not " fall on the ground without (the permission of) the Father " in heaven, how is it credible that a superfluous word could flow from the lips of the holy Evangelist, especially whilst he is narrating the sacred history of the Incarnate Word ? No, I cannot believe it. On the contrary, I affirm that everything here is full of heavenly mystery, every smallest detail abounding in divine sweetness, yet only for him who examines it with diligence, and who knows how to " suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the hardest stone." For, as the Prophet Joel predicted," on that day the mountains

dropped down sweetness and the hills overflowed with honey and milk," when the heavens "distilled dew from above and the clouds rained down the Just," when the exulting "earth opened and budded forth a Saviour," when "the Lord gave benignity and our earth yielded her fruit," when on that Mountain of mountains, on that "curdled and fat Mountain," "mercy and truth met each other, justice and peace embraced." At that time not the least among the other mountains, viz., the disciples of Christ, was this blessed Evangelist who, in mellifluous language, tells the entrancing story of the origin of our salvation,—a veritable aromatic hill, which of old under the warm breath of the south wind and from the vicinity of the radiant Sun of justice, exhaled and diffused abroad the sweet odour of its spicy treasures. Oh, that now also God would vouchsafe to "send out His word and melt" for us these spiritual spices! That "His wind would blow," in order to liquefy and make intelligible to us the odoriferous words of this Gospel narrative! That He would place them in our hearts as a rich inheritance, "more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb"!

The Evangelist therefore says, "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God." I do not suppose that this Angel belonged to the inferior choirs of blessed spirits who are frequently sent to the earth on embassies of ordinary importance. An evident reason for thinking so is furnished in his very name, because "Gabriel" signifies "Strength of God." Another reason is the fact that he is not said to have been sent by any higher angel, as is usually the case when the heavenly messenger happens

to be of inferior dignity,* but directly by God Himself. It is therefore with the design to insinuate this that the Evangelist is not content to say, "He was sent," but adds, "from God." Or perhaps the addition is made lest we should think that God revealed His counsel to any even of the celestial court before it was made known to the Virgin,† excepting of course the Archangel Gabriel, who was found so highly exalted amongst his fellow-spirits as to be accounted worthy of so glorious a name and of so honourable a mission. And his name accords well with his mission. For how could anyone more fittingly announce Christ, "Who is the Power of God," than he who has been honoured with the similar name of "Strength of God"? What difference is there between the Power of God and the Strength of God? Nor ought it to seem improper or unbecoming that the messenger should be called by the same name as his Master, since that name is not applied to both with the same signification. For Christ is called the "Power" or the "Strength of God" in a sense in which such a title cannot be understood of the Angel.

* That is to say, the lower angels ordinarily learn the divine decrees which concern themselves, not immediately from God, but by illumination from the higher spirits: just as on earth the divine will is made known to us through human superiors. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I. q. cvi. a. 1-2; cf. also Suarez, t. ii. l. vi. c. xii.-xv.—(Translator.)

† But how could the angels have been ignorant of what was known to the patriarchs and prophets? The Saint solves this difficulty (de Bapt. v.) by distinguishing between the substance of the mystery and its circumstances. That the Word was to become incarnate the angels knew from the beginning, but as to the circumstances of place, time, mode, and persons, they, like the prophets, had no clear knowledge. Somewhat similar is our own knowledge of Christ's second coming, as St. Bernard himself points out. In this position the holy Preacher is supported by St. Thomas, I. q. lxiv. a. 1; and by Suarez, t. ii. l. v. c. 6, n. 33.—(Translator.)

The name " Strength of God " as applied to the Angel is purely titular, whereas in Christ it is not a name simply, but a name that expresses His Nature. He is what He is called, the " Power of God," Who coming with superior strength upon " the strong man armed " that was wont to keep his court and his possessions in peace, " overcame him " by the might of His arm, and forcibly took away from him his captives and his spoil. But the Angel is named the " Strength of God," not because he possesses in himself the reality signified by this name, but either because he merited to obtain the high prerogative of being chosen to announce the coming of Him Who is the true " Strength of God " ; or else because it was his duty to comfort the Virgin, naturally timid, simple, and retiring, lest the announcement of so unheard of a prodigy should overwhelm her with fear : hence we find him reassuring her with the words, " Fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God." We may suppose, and not without reason, that it was the same Angel who comforted her humble and modest spouse also, saying to him, " Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," although in recording this incident the Evangelist does not mention the Angel's name. Gabriel, therefore, was most fittingly chosen to herald the Saviour's coming ; or rather he is most fittingly designated by this name because chosen for so high an office.

" The Angel Gabriel," then, " was sent from God." But whither ? " Into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth." Let us see whether, as Nathanael says, " any thing of good can come from Nazareth." The word " Nazareth " means " a flower." Now, it seems to me

that the celestial communications and promises made to the fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, were, in a sense, the seed of the divine counsel, cast from heaven on the earth. Of this seed Isaias says, "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us seed, we had been as Sodom, and we should have been like to Gomorrha." It attained to florescence in the wonders which were wrought "when Israel went out of Egypt," in the figures and signs exhibited throughout the whole long journey across the desert to the promised land, afterwards in the visions and predictions of the prophets, and finally in the institution and government of the kingdom and the priesthood, down to the Christian era. Christ Himself may be properly understood to be the Fruit of this seed and of these flowers. Hence the Royal Prophet sang, "The Lord will give goodness, and our earth shall yield her Fruit." And again, declaring God's promise to himself, "Of the Fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne." Christ therefore is announced to be born in Nazareth, because we naturally expect to see the fruit coming forth from the flower. But when the fruit has made its appearance, the flower falls off; so too, all types and figures vanished away as soon as Truth appeared in the flesh. Hence also Nazareth is said to be a "city of Galilee," that is, of "transmigration" (such being the meaning of the name Galilee), because at the birth of Christ all those things which I have just enumerated and which, as the Apostle declares, "happened to them (the Israelites) in figure," passed for ever away. Indeed we can see for ourselves we, who are now enjoying the Fruit, that the flowers are all withered and gone. And even whilst they were still

in bloom it had been foreseen that they should perish. This may be inferred from the words of the Psalmist, "In the morning it shall grow up like grass, in the morning, it shall flourish and pass away; in the evening it shall fall, grow dry and wither."* For "in the evening," that is to say, in the evening of the world, "when the fulness of time was come (and) God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," proclaiming, "Behold I make all things new": in that evening, I say, all the types and shadows of the old dispensation passed away and disappeared, just as the blossom falls and withers when the new fruit comes forth. Therefore it is also written, "The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen: but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." It will be granted, I suppose, that the Word here stands for the fruit. Now the Word of the Lord is Christ.

Christ is, consequently, the excellent Fruit That "endureth for ever." But where is the grass which has withered? Where is the flower which has fallen? Let the Prophet Isaias answer: "All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field."

But if "all flesh is grass" and if "the grass is withered," it follows that the nation of the Jews, since they are carnal, must be withered as the grass. Can we doubt that this people are withered, whilst we behold them, strangers to the sweet unction of grace, obstinately adhering to the dry and sapless letter? And is not their flower also fallen, since the glory which they derived from the law has been lost to them for ever? But if that flower still remains, where, then,

* This is only an accommodation, for it is clear from the context that the Prophet is speaking of man.—(Translator.)

is the kingdom ? where is the priesthood ? where the prophets, and the temple ? where those mighty wonders of which they used to boast, saying, " How great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us," and also, " How great things He commanded our fathers that they should make the same known to their children " ? This is all I have to say in connection with the words, " Into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth."

Therefore the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into this city of Nazareth. But to whom was he sent ? The Evangelist informs us, " To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph." And who is this Virgin, so venerable that she is saluted by an angel, yet so humble that she is espoused to an artisan ? We have here a beautiful alliance of virginity with humility. And surely that soul must be highly pleasing to God in which humility commends virginity and virginity adorns humility. But what degree of reverence shall we not judge her to be worthy of whose humility fruitfulness glorifies, and whose virginity is consecrated by motherhood ? You have learned that she was a virgin and you have learned that she was humble. If you cannot imitate the virginity of the humble Mary, at least imitate the humility of the virgin Mary. Very desirable is the virtue of virginity, yet humility is more necessary. We are counselled to embrace the former, but the latter is a matter of precept. To the one we are invited, to the other we are constrained. Concerning virginity the Saviour only says, " He that can take it, let him take it " ; whereas He speaks thus of humility : " Unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not

enter into the kingdom of heaven." The first, therefore, is commended with the promise of a special reward, whilst the second is exacted as a debt. One can be saved without virginity, but without humility salvation is utterly impossible. The soul that is humble, I say, even if she has to lament the loss of her virginity, may nevertheless be pleasing to God; but—I dare to affirm it—the virginity even of Mary would have no value in His eyes apart from her humility. Hence He has said by His Prophet Isaias, "Upon whom shall My Spirit rest but upon him that is humble and quiet?" * Notice that it is not on virginity He has promised that His Spirit shall rest, but on humility. Consequently, had Mary not been humble the Spirit of the Lord would not have rested upon her. But if He had not rested upon her, He would not certainly have made her fruitful. For how could she have conceived by Him without His co-operation? It is evident then that, as she herself declares, God "hath regarded the humility of His hand-maid" rather than her virginity, in order that she might conceive by the Holy Ghost. But although she was pleasing on account of her virginity, still it was her humility that made her a mother. And hence it may be said that her humility was the true reason why the Lord took complacence in her virginity.

What sayest thou to this, O proud virgin? Mary, forgetful of her virginity, glories only in her humility,

* This reading of Is. lxvi. 2, differs considerably from the Vulgate, which is thus rendered by the Douay Translators: "But to whom shall I have respect but to him that is poor and little?" The Septuagint differs from both: "ἐπὶ τίνα ἐπιβλέψω, ἀλλ' ἢ ἐπὶ τὸν ταπεινὸν καὶ ἡσύχιον;" "(To whom shall I have respect but to him that is humble and quiet?)—(Translator.)

and dost thou, on the contrary, applaud thyself for being a virgin whilst taking no pains to become an humble virgin? "He hath regarded," she says, "the humility of His hand-maid." Who is she that speaks thus? She is a virgin, and a virgin conspicuous for sanctity, for prudence, and for piety. Dost thou pretend to be more pure than she? or to be more pious? Perchance thou believest thy chastity to be more pleasing than was Mary's, and that thy virginity will be sufficient of itself, and without the help of humility, to win the favour of God, whereas her's was not? Oh, consider that the more honourable thou hast been made by the singular grace of chastity, the greater is the injury thou dost inflict on thyself by thus befouling thy beauty with the filth of pride! In truth, it were more expedient for thee to have lost thy virginity than to make its preservation a reason for pride.* Virginity is a virtue that is found with few, but far fewer are they who combine it with humility. If therefore thou be one who can only admire the virginity of Mary, apply thyself with zeal to copy her humility, and that will be enough for thee. But if thou art both a virgin and an humble virgin, thou hast attained to true greatness, whosoever thou mayest be.

Nevertheless, there is something further for thee to admire in Mary, something even more wonderful than this union of humility with virginity. I refer to that prerogative by which she unites integrity with fruitfulness. For "from the beginning of the world it hath not been

* Similarly St. Augustine: "Superbis continentibus expedit cadere, ut in eo ipso in quo se extollunt, humilientur" (Ser. 65 De Verbis Domini).—(Translator.)

heard that any " woman was at one and the same time a mother and a virgin. And oh ! if thou rememberest Whose Mother she was, what bounds shalt thou set to thy admiration of her incomparable grandeur ? Shalt thou not be brought to understand that thou canst never admire her as much as she deserves ? Shall not she who has God for her Son be exalted in thy judgment, as in the judgment of Truth, above all creatures, even above all the choirs of angels ? Is not the God of the universe and the Lord of the angels called Son by Mary, who, as the Evangelist St. Luke, tells us, once said to Him, " Son, why hast Thou done so to us ? " Which of the celestial princes would dare to use such language ? It is enough for them, yea, it is a great thing in their estimation, that having been created pure spirits, they received from grace the dignity and the name of angels of God. Hence the Psalmist says, speaking to the Lord, " Who makest Thy angels spirits." But Mary, remembering that she is His Mother, gives with confidence the name of Son to that awful Majesty Whom they are happy to serve with lowly reverence. Neither does the Lord disdain to be called what He has not disdained to become. For a little further on the same Evangelist from whom I have last quoted tells us that " He (Jesus) was subject to them," viz., to Mary and Joseph. God became subject to man ! God, before Whom the angels prostrate, Whose commands are carried out by the powers and the principalities, that God, I say, was subject to Mary, and not to Mary alone, but to Joseph also, for Mary's sake ! Admire therefore these two marvels, and choose which of them thou wilt admire the more, whether the gracious condescension

of the Son, or the glorious exaltation of the Mother. Each of them oppresses our mind, each of them passes our comprehension. That God should obey a woman is a condescension without parallel; that a woman should command God is a glory beyond compare. Where the Evangelist is speaking in praise of virgins, he mentions it as a special prerogative that "they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Of what praise, then, shalt thou deem her worthy, who follows not but precedes the Lamb?

Learn, O man, to obey; learn, O earth, to bear the yoke; learn, O dust, to be submissive. It is of thy Creator the Evangelist is speaking where he says, "And He was subject to them," namely, to Mary and Joseph. Oh, be ashamed, proud ashes! God humbles Himself, and dost thou exalt thyself? God subjects Himself to men, and dost thou, by striving to subject men to thee, prefer thyself to thy Maker? Would to God that, whenever such ambitious thoughts possess my soul, I might hear addressed to me the words in which the Saviour once replied to the Apostle who had rebuked Him, "Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men"! For as often as I entertain the desire to rule over men, so often do I endeavour to run before God. Then truly I do not "savour the things that are of God," of Whom it is written that "He was subject to them." O man, if thou disdainest to follow the example of man, surely thou wilt not deem it a dishonour to imitate thy Creator. And if thou art not able to follow Him "whithersoever He goeth," at least refuse not to follow Him whither He condescends

for thy sake. I mean to say, if thou canst not follow Him in the sublime way of virginity, follow Him, follow thy God in the safe path of humility, from the straightness of which should any one wander, even though he belong to the number of the virgins, such a one, to confess the truth, does not "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." The proud virgin does indeed follow the Lamb, and so too does the humble penitent; but neither follows Him whithersoever He goeth, because whilst the latter cannot ascend to the purity of the Lamb Who is without spot, the former is equally unable to descend to His lowly meekness, Who was dumb not only before His shearers, but even before His slayers. Nevertheless, the penitent soul that follows Him in the path of humility has taken a safer course than the proud soul that imitates His virginity. For whereas humble satisfaction shall wipe away the stains of the one, the purity of the other shall be tarnished by her pride.

But how happy is Mary, to whom neither humility is wanting nor virginity! Hers, moreover, is a singular virginity, which her fruitfulness has not injured but enhanced; just as hers is an unparalleled humility, which her fruitful virginity impaired not but glorified; aye, and her fruitfulness also is incomparable, attended and adorned as it is by humility and virginity. In which of these qualities is not Mary wonderful? in which is she not pre-eminent? in which not unique? I shall be very much surprised if, in balancing them, one against the other, thou art not puzzled to determine which is the most worthy of thy admiration, whether thou shouldst feel greater wonder at the fruitfulness of the virgin than at the integrity of the

mother; at her exaltation in her Son, or at her humility in the midst of such glory. But undoubtedly all these, taken together, are more marvellous than any one of them; and it is an incomparably better and happier lot to have received the whole of them than some without the others.

And what matter for surprise is it that God, Who is said and Who is seen to be "wonderful in His saints," has shown Himself still more wonderful in His Mother? O all ye who are engaged in the married state, look with admiration on this incorruption of the flesh in corruptible flesh! Ye consecrated virgins, wonder at this alliance of virginity and motherhood! Children of Adam all, imitate the humility of God's Mother! And do you, O holy angels, honour the Mother of your King whilst you adore the Child of our Virgin, Him Whom both you and we acknowledge as our Sovereign Lord, Who is the Redeemer of our race and the Restorer of your city. To the Same, therefore, so sublime with you in heaven, so humble with us on earth, let us all unite in showing the reverence which His Majesty requires, and the honour and glory which is due to His condescension both now and for evermore. Amen.

SECOND SERMON ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

" The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,
" To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary."— Luke i.—26-27.

No one will question that that new canticle which only virgins shall be permitted to sing in the kingdom of God, shall be sung by her who is the Queen of virgins, as well as by the others, aye, and that she shall take the lead in singing it. But it seems to me that besides this canticle, in which, though proper to virgins, yet all the virgins, as I have said, shall join with their Queen, there is another more sweet and sublime wherewith she alone shall rejoice the city of God. No one else, even amongst the virgins, shall be found worthy to utter and express the sweet-sounding modulations of this second song. The right to sing it shall be reserved, and justly, to her alone, who alone of virgins glories also in being a mother, and in being the Mother of God. But although she glories thus, she does not glory in herself, but in Him Whom she has brought forth. That is to say, she glories in the Lord Who has made Himself her Son, and Who, having prepared for His Mother a singular glory in heaven, willed also to endow her on earth with a singular grace, whereby, in an ineffable manner, she might conceive without stain and bring forth without corruption. For the only nativity worthy of God was that which made Him Son of the Virgin, just as the only maternity

worthy of the Virgin was that which made her Mother of God. Now, when the Creator of men willed to become man and to be born in the human way, it was necessary for Him to select, or rather to create for Himself, out of all possible women, such a Mother as He foreknew would be worthy of Him and deserving of His esteem. He therefore decreed that she should be a virgin, from whose immaculate womb He would issue forth immaculate, in order to cleanse all others from their stains.* He likewise decreed that she should be humble, so that she might worthily give birth to one Who is meek and humble of heart, and Who was destined to exhibit to the world, in His own life, a necessary and most salutary example of these two virtues. Therefore, He who had before inspired her with the will to make a vow of virginity,† and had also endowed her with a singular grace of humility, now caused her to experience the joys of motherhood, whilst remaining still an immaculate virgin. For how could the Angel pronounce her *full* of grace (as is read further on) if she possessed any, even the very least good, which was not the fruit of divine grace?

Thus she who was destined to conceive and bring forth the Saint of saints, obtained the grace of virginity in order that she might be "holy in body," and the grace of humility that she might also be "holy in spirit." Adorned, therefore, with these gems of the virtues, all resplendent with this double sanctity of body and spirit, the Royal Virgin "by her comeliness

* "Voluit itaque esse virginem de qua immaculata immaculatus procedere, omnium maculas purgaturus."

† The same opinion is expressed by St. Augustine, *Lib. de sancta Virginitate* c. iv. According to St. Thomas (*Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxviii. a. iv.) the Blessed Virgin took this vow *after* her espousals and with St. Joseph's consent.—(Translator.)

and her beauty" became an object of admiration to heaven, attracting to herself the wondering eyes of its citizens, and even inclining the Heart of the King to desire her beauty; with the result that she was visited from on high by the celestial ambassador. This is what the Evangelist intimates, when he tells us that the Angel was sent from God to the Virgin. "The Angel Gabriel," he says, "was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin," that is, from the Most High to the most humble, from the Lord to the hand-maid, from the Creator to the creature. How great a condescension on the part of God! How great an exaltation for the Virgin! Come hither in haste, all ye mothers; come hither, ye daughters; come hither all ye who after Eve and on account of Eve have been condemned to bring forth in sorrow. Draw near to this virginal sanctuary. Enter, if you can, your Sister's modest chamber. Behold, she has received a message from the Lord! Behold, an archangel is conversing with Mary! Put your ear to the door and try to catch what he says to her. Perhaps you shall hear something that may be a source of consolation.

Rejoice, O father Adam, but thou still more, O mother Eve! Rejoice and be glad, both of you, who have been the destroyers of us all, as you are the parents of us all; and, what added to the misery, you were our destroyers even before you became our parents. Let both of you, I say, find consolation in this Daughter, so singularly endowed and so highly privileged, but thou, especially, from whom the evil originally took its rise and whose reproach has descended upon all women. For behold the time is at

hand when that curse shall be taken away, and when the woman shall no longer deserve to be complained of by her husband, who, whilst foolishly attempting to exonerate himself, did not shrink from the cruelty of accusing his wife, saying, "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree and I did eat." Run, then, O Eve, run to Mary. Take refuge, O mother, with thy Daughter. Let the Daughter answer for the mother, let her take away her mother's reproach; let her make satisfaction to the man for the woman's transgression. For if the man originally fell by the woman, it is also by the woman that he is now lifted up. What is that thou didst say, O Adam? "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree and I did eat." These are "words of malice," and, instead of excusing, rather increase thy fault. Nevertheless, Wisdom gained the victory over malice, because the reason for pardoning which God tried to obtain from thee, by His questioning, but could not, He has discovered in the treasury of His own inexhaustible mercy. Another woman is now given thee in place of the first, a prudent and humble Eve instead of the proud and foolish one, an Eve who shall offer thee, not the tree of death but the Bread of Life, and who shall yield thee, not the poisoned fruit of bitterness but the delicious fruit of immortality. Change thou, therefore, the wicked words of self-excuse into the voice of praise and thanksgiving, and say to the Lord, "The woman whom Thou gavest me, gave me of the tree of life and I did eat; and it has become in my mouth sweeter than honey, because in it Thou hast given me life." Behold here the purpose for which the Angel was sent from

God to the Virgin. O Virgin, worthy of all admiration, deserving of all honour! O most wonderful of women and venerable over all, who hast repaired the ruin which our parents wrought and recovered life for their posterity!

"The Angel Gabriel," says the Evangelist, "was sent to a virgin," that is, to one who was a virgin in body, a virgin in mind, a virgin who had sealed her virginity by vow, such a virgin as the Apostle describes as "holy both in body and in spirit"; to a virgin not newly discovered nor discovered by chance, but chosen from eternity, foreknown and prepared for Himself by the Most High, guarded by angels, exhibited by the patriarchs under types and figures, announced from afar by the prophets. "Search the Scriptures" and verify what I say. Or do you wish that I should adduce here some of the relevant testimonies? Well, I shall present you with a few out of many. Of whom, then, if not of the Virgin, does the Lord appear to have spoken when He said to the serpent, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman"? But if you are not yet convinced that He was alluding to Mary, attend to what follows, "She* shall crush thy head." For whom but Mary was that victory reserved? She undoubtedly crushed the serpent's venemous head by bringing to naught every attempt of the wicked one to seduce her with his suggestions of pleasure and pride.

Again, whom else but Mary was Solomon seeking when he asked, "Who shall find a valiant woman?" For, being a man of great wisdom, he knew how

* So it is read in the Vulgate and some other Versions; but according to the Greek and the Hebrew it is the woman's Seed that shall crush the serpent's head.—(Translator.)

fragile was the female sex, how weak in body and inconstant in mind.* But he knew also from the Scriptures the promise made by God—and it seemed to him only natural—that he who had conquered by a woman should be conquered by a woman. And hence he cried out in an excess of admiration, "Who shall find a valiant woman?" That is to say, "If the salvation of us all, and the recovery of our innocence, and our victory over Satan, thus depend upon a woman, it is absolutely essential to find a valiant woman, who shall be capable of accomplishing so difficult a task. But who shall find such a valiant woman?" However, lest anyone should suppose that he says this in despair, he adds, speaking as a prophet, "Far and far from the uttermost bounds is the price of her." That is, not vile, not little, not ordinary, not even of the earth, is the worth of this valiant woman, but it must be sought in heaven, and not in the heaven which is nearest to us, but "its going out is from the highest heaven." In the next place consider that bush which Moses once beheld giving forth flames of fire without being burnt. Was not this a type of Mary bringing forth her Infant without feeling the pangs of child-birth?† And the dry rod of Aaron that "bloomed blossoms," do you not recognise here a figure of her who conceived although she knew not man? Thus the great miracle of the flowering rod contained a mystery still greater; and it is of this

* Compare Virgil: "Varium et mutabile semper femina."—*Æn.* iv. 569-570.

† It is also understood as symbolising her perpetual virginity. Hence the Church sings, "Rubum quem viderat Moyses incombustum conservatam agnovimus tuam laudabilem virginitatem" (Third Antiphon for Vespers of the Feast of Circumcision).—(Translator.)

the Prophet Isaias speaks where he says, " There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root," signifying by the rod the Virgin, and by the flower of the rod the Virgin's Offspring.

It may appear to you that what has just been said, namely, that Christ is represented by the flower, is opposed to my previous interpretation of this passage, according to which it is not the flower of the rod that symbolises Him, but the fruit of the flower. You must know, however, that in the same rod of Aaron (which not only " bloomed blossoms " but also put forth leaves and fruit) we have types of Christ in the leaves and fruit as well as in the blossom. You must know also that in Moses He is designated by neither the fruit nor the flower of the rod, but by the rod itself, with which the Lawgiver on one occasion struck the water and divided it for the people to cross,* and on another the rock, causing a fountain to spring forth for the refreshment of the thirsty. For there is nothing incongruous in different things representing Christ under different aspects. Thus the rod reminds us of His power ; the flower of the good odour of His fame ; the fruit of His sweetness ; the leaves of His ever-watchful providence, whereby He never refuses to protect under the shadow of His wings all that flee to Him, either from the heat of carnal desires, or from the fury of the impious who afflict them. Oh, how sweet and desirable it is to be sheltered under the

* Cf. Exodus xiv. 21. It is not said that Moses struck the water with his rod, but that " when Moses stretched his hand over the sea, the Lord took it away by a strong and burning wind blowing all the night, and turned it into dry ground : and the water was divided."—(Translator.)

wings of Jesus, where the persecuted find a safe asylum and the weary rest and refreshment! "Have mercy on me," Lord Jesus, "have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in Thee, and in the shadow of Thy wings will I hope until iniquity pass away." Yet, in the testimony quoted from Isaias, the flower must be understood to symbolise the Son and the rod as relating to the Mother; because just as the rod "bloomed blossoms" without seed, so did the Virgin conceive without man's co-operation; and as the putting forth of the flower did not destroy the freshness of the rod, so neither did her sacred child-birth injure Mary's virginity.

Let me now bring forward a few more Scriptural testimonies relating to the Virgin Mother and her Divine Son. The fleece of Gideon, which he had shorn from the flesh of the sheep without wounding that flesh, and which, when laid on the floor, was at one time found all wet with dew, though the place about it was dry, at another as dry as the ground was before, whilst now the ground was drenched—what does this fleece signify, if not the flesh assumed from the flesh of the Virgin, without prejudice to her virginity? * For it was upon her that heaven rained down its mystical dew what time the Fulness of the Divinity poured Itself "corporally" into her bosom, so that of her plenitude we might all receive, who without her should be nothing better than dry earth. To this twofold miracle, granted to Gideon's prayer, the Psalmist seems to refer

* This interpretation is adopted by the Church in the second antiphon of Vespers of the Feast of Circumcision: "quando natus es ineffabiliter ex virgine, tunc impletae sunt Scripturae: sicut pluvia in vellus descendisti ut salvum faceres genus humanum."—(Translator.)

very beautifully, when he says, speaking of Christ, "He shall come down like rain upon the fleece, and as showers gently falling upon the earth," alluding in the first part of the verse to the instance in which the fleece was found wet and the floor dry, in the second part to that in which the contrary was the case. For that "voluntary rain" which God hath "set aside for His inheritance" descended first into the Virgin's womb, most gently and softly, without the noise and bustle characteristic of human operations. Afterwards it was spread through the world by the mouths of preachers, no longer falling as dew upon the fleece, but descending as showers upon the earth, amidst the clamour of tongues and the tumult of miracles. For those spiritual clouds * who carried this rain remembered the command given them when they received their mission, "That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light; and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house-tops." And so indeed they acted, because, as the Prophet had predicted of them, "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Let us next hear Jeremias announcing a new wonder to the ancients, whilst he longs for with ardour and faithfully promises the coming of Him Whom he was not able to point out as actually present. "The Lord," he says, "hath created a new thing upon the earth; a woman shall compass a man." Now, who is this woman? And who is this man? If he be a

* "Qui sunt isti, qui ut nubes volant?" (Is. lx. 8), used as Responsary for fourth lesson, second nocturn of the common of Apostles (Cistercian Breviary.)—(Translator.)

man, how can he be compassed by a woman? And if he be compassed by a woman, how is he a man? To speak more plainly, how is it possible for him to be a man and at the same time to be enclosed within his mother's womb? For this is what the Prophet means when he says a woman shall encompass a man. Those, as you know, are called men, who, after passing through the periods of infancy, boyhood, adolescence, and early manhood, have attained to that which is followed by old age. How then can one who is so advanced be compassed by a woman? Had the Prophet merely proclaimed that a woman should compass an infant, or that a woman should compass a little one, he would have predicted nothing new, nothing marvellous. Such, however, was not his announcement, but that "a woman shall compass a man." It is therefore incumbent on us to inquire into the meaning of this "new thing" which the Lord "hath created upon the earth," that a woman should compass a man, and that a man should be so contracted as to be confined within the womb of a woman. What manner of miracle is this? "Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb," asked Nicodemus, "and be born again?"

Let us turn to the conception and child-birth of the Virgin. Perhaps amongst the many wonders and prodigies which shall certainly be found there by diligent inquiry, I may also discover that "new thing" whereof the Prophet Jeremias speaks. There, beyond doubt, I behold eternity shortened, Immensity contracted, Sublimity levelled down, Profundity made shallow. I contemplate there Light without splendour, the Word without speech, Water Which is thirsty, and Bread That feels

hunger. There, too, if thou art attentive, thou mayest notice Omnipotence being ruled, Omniscience being instructed, Virtue supported, God feeding at the breast whilst He nourishes the angels, God wailing with grief whilst consoling the wretched. Thou shalt there, if thou observest, see Joy a prey to sadness, Confidence fearful, Health in suffering, Life enduring death, Strength rendered feeble. Aye, and what is not less astonishing, thou mayest there discover sadness giving joy, fear producing confidence, suffering a source of health, death communicating life, weakness imparting strength. And surely there is none who does not already recognise here that other miracle for which I have been seeking. Is it not easy to discern amongst the prodigies just enumerated, that of the woman compassing the man, when we behold Mary enclosing in her womb "Jesus, a Man approved of God"? For I call Jesus a man not only when He was described as a "Man Who was a Prophet, mighty in word and work before God and all the people," but also, when His Mother, the Mother of God, either bore Him in her womb, or as a tender Infant fondly nursed Him on her lap. Therefore, even whilst He was yet unborn, Jesus was a man, a man not in age but in wisdom, not in bodily strength but in vigour of mind, not in the development of His physical members, but in the maturity of His mental powers. For Jesus was not less wise, or rather I should say, was not less Wisdom, whilst still in the womb than after His birth, when He was a little one than when He was full-grown. Whether, then, we consider Him as the Babe unborn, or as the Infant wailing in the crib, or as the grown-up Boy, questioning the doctors in the temple, or as

the Man of mature age teaching the multitude, He was always and equally full of the Holy Ghost. There was not a moment at any period of His life when that fulness which He received at His conception was either increased by anything or by anything diminished; because from the beginning He was perfect, from the beginning I say, He was full "of the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, of the Spirit of counsel and of fortitude, of the Spirit of knowledge and of piety, of the Spirit of the fear of the Lord."

Do not think there is anything inconsistent in what I have been saying with that which is written in St. Luke, "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man." For what is here said of His growth in wisdom and grace must be understood, not of these qualities in themselves, but of their outward manifestation: not in the sense that anything was added to Him which He had not before, but only that there was an appearance of such an addition whenever He willed it to be so.* Thou, O man, when thou progressest, dost not go forward when thou wilt nor as far as thou wilt. Although thou perceivest it not, thy progress is regulated and thy life ordered by Another. But Jesus, Who disposes thy life, had the disposition of His own life also; and to whom He willed, and when He willed, He showed Himself wise or more wise, or most wise, although in Himself He was never anything but most wise. Similarly, though He was always full of all grace, both that which must be exhibited to the eyes of God and that which is

* St. Thomas answers the question: Did Christ make progress in knowledge? in almost the same words. Cf. *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xii. a. 2. In Sermon LVI. on the Canticle St. Bernard teaches that there was real progress in Christ's *experimental* knowledge.—(Translator.)

owing to men, He nevertheless made it manifest, at His pleasure, in greater or lesser degree, according to what He knew was consonant with the merits or expedient for the salvation of the beholders. It is evident, then, that with respect to the faculties and endowments of His Soul, Jesus was always a man, although He did not always appear with a fully developed body. For why should I doubt that He was a man in the womb when I have no doubt that He was God in the womb? Surely, it is not so great a thing to be a man as to be God? But see if the Prophet Isaias, who has already told us the meaning of the fresh flowers on Aaron's rod, does not also explain for us most clearly this strange prodigy announced by Jeremias. "Behold," he says, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." Here you have the woman that is to compass a man, namely, the Virgin. And as to the man, do you desire to know who he is? "And his name shall be called Emmanuel, that is, God-with-us." Therefore, the woman compassing the man is the Virgin Mother conceiving God. Observe here how beautifully and how harmoniously the miraculous deeds * and the mystical words of holy men combine and fit together. Remark also how stupendous must have been this one miracle wrought in relation to the Virgin and within the Virgin, since it was heralded by so many wonders, and promised by so many oracles. All the prophets had the same Spirit, and all, however much they differed from each other in other respects, foresaw and predicted in the same Spirit the same great truth, at various times, in various manners, and under various

* He alludes to what he has related from the histories of Moses, Aaron, and Gideon.—(Translator.)

figures. What was revealed to Moses in the bush and the fire, to Aaron in the rod and the flower, to Gideon in the fleece and the dew: the same was clearly announced by Solomon in the valiant woman and her price, more clearly still by Jeremias in the woman and the man she was to compass, and most clearly by Isaias, who explained it of God and the Virgin, and was finally exhibited to view when Gabriel saluted Mary. For the Virgin mentioned by the Prophet is the same of whom the Evangelist writes, "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary."

"To a virgin espoused." Wherefore * was she espoused? Being, I say, a virgin elect, and, as has been shown, destined to conceive as a virgin, and to bring forth as a virgin, it may seem strange that she should have contracted an engagement which was never to be consummated in marriage. No one surely will be foolish enough to say that this was due to chance. That is certainly not the result of chance which appears to be commended by a rational purpose, aye, by a most useful and necessary purpose, a purpose worthy of the counsels of divine wisdom. I will now say what I think on this subject, or rather I will offer the explanation which has occurred to the fathers before me. The reason, then, of Mary's espousals was the same as that for which the Apostle Thomas was permitted to doubt. It was a Jewish custom that from the day of the betrothal to that appointed for the nuptials, the affianced should be placed under

* From this paragraph are taken the lessons of the third nocturn for the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19th.—(Translator.)

the care of her intended husband, who would watch over the virtue of his future wife with a diligence proportionate to his regard for his own honour. Therefore, just as Thomas, by first doubting the truth and then proving it by the testimony of his touch, was made a most firm confessor of the Lord's resurrection, so also Joseph, by espousing to himself Mary and by closely observing her conduct during the time of engagement, became a most trustworthy witness of her virtue. There is thus a beautiful resemblance between the espousals of the Virgin and the Apostle's doubt. Each of the two was in itself well calculated to entangle us in the meshes of a similar net of error ; that is to say, Thomas's doubt might have caused us to suspect his faith, and Mary's betrothal her virtue. But in both cases, the matter was arranged with such prudence and piety that what should naturally have aroused suspicion has been made the very means of confirming our faith. For, with respect to the resurrection of the Son, I, because I am weak, should more readily believe Thomas, who doubted, and could only be convinced by the evidence of his senses, than Cephas, who assented to the truth as soon as it was announced to him. And as to the Mother's integrity, I should find it easier to accept the testimony of Joseph, her guardian and associate, than that of the Virgin defending herself by the sole witness of her own conscience. Who, I ask, seeing her with child before marriage, would not rather declare her a sinner than a virgin ? Now it would have been altogether unbecoming that anything such should be said of the Mother of God. It was more tolerable and more proper that, for a time, Christ should be considered to have been born

in wedlock in the ordinary way, than born of a sinner.*

Perhaps it will be said, could not God have given some manifest sign which would at once safeguard the virgin birth and demonstrate the mother's innocence? Undoubtedly. But that which men would know could not be kept secret from the demon. Now it was necessary to conceal for a while from "the prince of this world" the grand design of the divine wisdom. Not that God, if He willed to accomplish His purpose openly, could have any fear of being prevented by Satan. But because, as He "hath done all things whatsoever He would," not only with might, but also with wisdom, and as He is wont in His other works to attend to the fittingness of things and of seasons, out of regard for order and beauty, so too, in this most magnificent of His works, the work, namely, of our redemption, He willed to display His prudence as well as His power. And although, had He so wished, He could have wrought our salvation in a different manner, nevertheless He preferred to reconcile us to Himself in the way and order in which He knew we had lapsed. Hence, as the devil first seduced the woman and then by the woman conquered the man: so he was to be in turn first deceived by another woman, viz., the

* Compare the following from St. Ambrose: "Cur autem non antequam desponsaretur (Maria) impleta est? Fortasse ne diceretur quod conceperat ex adulterio. Et bene utrumque posuit Scriptura, ut et desponsata est et virgo. Virgo, ut expers virilis consortii videretur. Desponsata, ne temeratae virginitatis aduraretur infamia, cui gravis alvus corruptelae videretur insigne praeferre. Maluit autem Dominus aliquos de sui ortu quam de matris pudore dubitare. Sciebat enim teneram esse virginis verecundiam et lubricam famam pudoris; nec putavit ortus sui fidem matris injuriis astruendam" (*In Lucam*, l. 11).—(Translator.)

Virgin Mary, and next openly vanquished by another man, that is, by Christ. Thus, whilst the wisdom of piety overreached the cunning of malice, and the virtue of Christ overcame the power of the wicked one, God would be revealed as at once more mighty and more prudent than Satan. So it became incarnate Wisdom to conquer spiritual malice, in order that He might not only "reach from end to end powerfully" but at the same time "dispose all things sweetly." Now, He had already in truth "reached from end to end," that is, from the height of heaven to the depth of the abyss; and hence the Psalmist says, "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present." And to both these extremes He had "reached mightily," since from heaven He had banished the proud, and in hell despoiled the greedy. It was fitting, therefore, that He should likewise "dispose all things sweetly," in heaven and on earth, that, after driving forth the disturber from paradise, He should establish the rest in peace, and descending hither to overthrow the envious one, should first give us the very necessary example of His meekness and humility. Thus should it come to pass by a marvellous arrangement of divine wisdom that He would appear sweet to His friends and mighty to His enemies. The example of His humility I have said, was necessary to us, for where would be the profit of God's triumph over Satan if we continued proud? There was good reason, therefore, why Mary should be espoused to Joseph, since in this way that which was so holy was kept hidden from the dogs, the virtue of the Mother had the witness of her spouse, and at the same time a defence was provided for the Virgin's modesty and

fair fame.* Could anything be more prudent or more worthy of divine providence? By this single device three objects were attained: the heavenly secret was revealed to Joseph so that he might give testimony of it, it was concealed from the enemy, whilst the Mother's good name was preserved intact. Without such knowledge how could the just Joseph have spared her whom he must have thought a sinner? It is written, however. "Whereupon Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately." Well does the Evangelist say that, "being a just man," he was unwilling to expose her; because, as he would not have been just had he spared one whom he knew to be guilty, so neither would he have been just if he condemned one of whose innocence he had had proof. Therefore, "being a just man and not willing publicly to expose her, he was minded to put her away privately."

But why was he "minded to put her away," if conscious of her innocence? Here again I will offer an explanation not excogitated by myself, but derived from the fathers. Joseph wished to put away his spouse for the same reason on account of which Peter begged of the Lord to leave him, exclaiming, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," and on account of which the Centurion prayed that He would

* St. Jerome assigns the following reasons for Mary's espousals (*Comment. in Matth.* l. 1, c. i.), "Quare non de simplici virgine concipitur (Christus)? Primum, ut per generationem Joseph, origo Mariae monstraretur; secundo, ne lapidaretur a Judaeis ut adultera; tertio, ut in Aegyptum fugiens haberet solatium. Martyr Ignatius etiam quartam addidit causam cur a sponsata conceptus sit: ut partus, inquiens, ejus celaretur a diabolo, dum putat eum non de virgine sed de uxore generatum." See also St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxix. a. 1.—(Translator.)

not enter his house, saying, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof." Thus Joseph also, considering himself unworthy and a sinner, said to himself that it was not befitting for a man like him to live any longer in such intimate relations with one so great and exalted, whose sublime dignity inspired him with awe. He trembled on beholding by the clearest indications that she bore in her bosom the Divinity incarnate; and as he could not fathom the mystery, he "was minded to put her away." Peter was frightened at the omnipotence of God; the Centurion feared the Majesty of His presence. In the same way this prodigy, so great and so unparalleled, this mystery, so dark and profound, alarmed Joseph, who was but a man, and hence he was "minded to put her away." How can you wonder that Joseph deemed himself unworthy of the Virgin Mother's society when you hear from St. Elizabeth that she could not endure the presence of Mary except with fear and awe? For thus she exclaims: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Here, then, is the reason for which Joseph "was minded to put her away." * But wherefore secretly and not rather publicly? It was doubtless to prevent any questions being asked with regard to the separation, and to avoid the necessity of revealing the cause. For what answer could the holy man have given to that stiff-necked people, to that people "not believing and contradicting"? Were he to tell them all he knew and the proofs he had of her innocence,

* Amongst the supporters of this opinion are Origen, St. Basil, and St. Jerome: also St. Bridget (*Revel.* l. vii., c. xxx.), who claims that its truth was supernaturally made known to her. (Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. in Matth.* c. i.).—(Translator.)

would they not, those cruel and incredulous Jews, instead of being persuaded, rather have mocked at him and stoned her? They who, later on, despised and rejected Truth crying out in the temple, how could they have believed Truth when hidden in the womb? What would they have done to Him whilst yet unborn, on Whom afterwards, when glorified by miracles, they did not hesitate to lay sacrilegious hands? With reason therefore was the just man "minded to put her away privately," lest otherwise he should be compelled either to lie or to defame the innocent.

Should anyone, however, prefer a different explanation, and believe that Joseph doubted from human reasons, that, "being a just man," he was unwilling to live with one whom he suspected, yet, being also merciful, he would not expose her, and so "was minded to put her away privately": I answer briefly that even thus Joseph's doubting was without blame, seeing that he was deemed worthy of being enlightened by a heavenly oracle. For, as the Evangelist tells us, "while he thought on these things (that is, how he might put her away privately) behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Such, therefore, are the reasons why Mary was espoused to Joseph, or rather, as the Evangelist expresses it, "to a man whose name was Joseph." He calls Joseph a man (*vir*) not because he was Mary's husband, but to indicate that he was endowed with virtue (*homo virtutis*). Or, since he is called her husband by another Evangelist, it may be said that, as he necessarily seemed to stand in that relation to her, he was justly

entitled to the name. It was therefore right to speak of him as if he really were what people could not help supposing him ; just as he also merited, not indeed to be, but to be called and reputed the father of the Saviour. So we read in St. Luke, " And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years : being (as it was supposed) the Son of Joseph." Consequently, he was in reality no more the husband of the Mother than he was the father of the Child, although, as I have said, he was called and reputed both for a time, by a special and necessary dispensation.*

What † and how great was the dignity of Joseph you may learn from this title, wherewith, although it was purely official, he merited to be honoured by God, so

* Similarly St. Jerome (*Comment. in Matth.* i. 16), " Cum virum audieris suspicio tibi non subeat nuptiarum, sed recordare consuetudinis scripturarum, quod sponsi viri et sponsae uxores vocantur." But it is evident that what both doctors deny is that St. Joseph was Mary's husband in a sense which would be incompatible with her virginity : that the marriage between them was not only " ratum," but also ' consummatum." Hence St. Thomas writes (*Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxix. a. 2), " Dicendum quod matrimonium dicitur verum ex hoc quod suam perfectionem attingit. Duplex est autem rei perfectio, prima et secunda. Prima quidem rei perfectio consistit in ipsa forma ex qua speciem sortitur. Secunda vero perfectio consistit in operatione rei per quam res aliqualiter suum finem attingit. Forma autem matrimonii consistit in quadam indivisibili conjunctione animorum, per quam unus conjugum indivisibiliter alteri fidem servare tenetur. Finis autem matrimonii est proles generanda et educanda : ad quorum primum pervenitur per actum conjugalem, ad secundum per alia opera viri et uxoris, quibus sibi invicem obsequuntur ad prolem nutriendam.

" Sic igitur dicendum est quod quantum ad primam perfectionem, omnino fuit verum matrimonium Virginis Matris Dei et Joseph . ; . quantum vero ad secundam perfectionem quae est per actum matrimonii . . . non fuit illud matrimonium consummatum." See also A Lapide, *Comment. in Matth.* i. 18. —(Translator.)

† The lessons of the second nocturn for the Feast of St. Joseph are taken from this paragraph.—(Translator.)

that he was called and considered the father of God. It may also be conjectured from his own proper name, which undoubtedly signifies "increase." Remember at the same time that illustrious Patriarch who was sold of yore into Egypt, and be assured that Mary's spouse has inherited not only his name, but also his chastity, his grace, and his innocence. The elder Joseph, in his being sold into Egypt through the envy of his brethren, typified the betrayal of Christ by His Apostle; whilst the younger, to escape from the envy of King Herod, fled into Egypt by night with the Saviour. The former, true to his allegiance, respected his master's honour in his mistress; the latter recognising in his spouse the Virgin Mother of his Lord, became the witness and the guardian of her integrity. The former was gifted with the power of understanding prophetic dreams; the latter was privileged to become the confidant of God's mysterious designs and a co-operator in their accomplishment. The one preserved the corn, not for himself but for the people; the other was chosen to preserve, both for himself and for all the world, "the Living Bread That came down from heaven." There can be no manner of doubt that this Joseph, to whom was espoused the Saviour's Mother, was singularly good and faithful. He was, I say, the good and faithful servant, whom the Lord appointed to be the consolation of His Mother, the support of His Humanity, and His one most faithful coadjutor on earth in the execution of His mighty purpose. To this must be added that he is declared to have been of the house of David. Truly this Joseph was descended from David, truly he came of a royal stock, yet though noble by his ancestry, he was nobler still by his virtues and

character. He was indeed the son of David, and well worthy to have David for his father. He was, I say, the son of David, and that, not only according to the flesh, but also by his faith, by his sanctity, and by his devotion. Him, like another David, the Lord found to be a man according to His own Heart, and one to whom He might safely entrust the most hidden and the most holy secret of His mind. To him, therefore, as to his father David, He "made known the uncertain and hidden things of His wisdom"; and He admitted him to the knowledge of the mystery "which none of the princes of this world knew." Yea, and Him Whom "many kings and prophets desired to see and did not see," desired to hear and did not hear, Him it was granted to Joseph not only to see and to hear, but even to carry in his arms, to lead by the hand, to embrace, to kiss, to support, and to protect. But we must believe that Mary as well as Joseph was descended from David. For unless she also belonged to the house of David she could not have been espoused to one of that royal stock.* Therefore both Mary and Joseph were of David's line, and in Mary was fulfilled the promise which the Lord gave under oath to David, whilst it was Joseph's office to be cognisant of that fulfilment and to bear witness to the same.

At the end of the verse occur these words, "And the Virgin's name was Mary." Let me say something

* "The intelligent reader may ask, why does the Evangelist give us the genealogy of Joseph, since he is not the father of Christ? To this I answer, in the first place, that it is not in accordance with Scriptural usage to make mention of women in genealogies; and secondly, that Joseph and Mary belonged to the same tribe: hence the law obliged him to marry her as his cousin, and as belonging to the same family, they were enrolled together at Bethlehem" (St. Jerome, *Comment. in Matth.*, l. i.).—(Translator.)

concerning this name also, which is interpreted to mean "Star of the sea," and admirably suits the Virgin Mother.* There is indeed a wonderful appropriateness in this comparison of her to a star, because as a star sends out its ray without detriment to itself, so did the Virgin bring forth her Child without injury to her integrity. And as the ray emitted does not diminish the brightness of the star, so neither did the Child born of her tarnish the beauty of Mary's virginity. She is therefore that glorious star, which, according to prophecy, arose out of Jacob, whose ray illumines the entire earth, whose splendour shines out conspicuously in heaven and reaches even unto hell; a star which, enlightening the universe, and communicating warmth rather to souls than to bodies, fosters virtue and extinguishes vice. She, I say, is that resplendent and radiant star, placed as a necessary beacon above life's "great and spacious sea," glittering with merits, luminous with examples for our imitation. Oh, whosoever thou art that perceivest thyself during this mortal existence to be rather floating in the treacherous waters, at the mercy of the winds and the waves, than walking secure on the stable earth, turn not away thine eyes from the splendour of this guiding star, unless thou wishest to be submerged by the tempest! When the storms of temptation burst upon

* There are various other interpretations of this name. "Mary signifies 'the sea,' because by her merits and intercession she washes us from our sins"—St. Antoninus. "Mary means 'enlightener,' because she brought forth the Light of the world. In the Syriac tongue, Mary signifies 'Lady'"—St. Isidore. St. Thomas follows St. Bernard: "Mary means 'star of the sea,' because just as the star of the sea guides the navigators to port, so does Mary guide Christians to glory"—Opusc. 8, super Ave Maria.—(Translator.)

thee, when thou seest thyself driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look up at the star, call upon Mary. When buffeted by the billows of pride, or ambition, or hatred, or jealousy, look up at the star, call upon Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or carnal desires violently assail the little vessel of thy soul, look up at the star, call upon Mary. If troubled on account of the heinousness of thy sins, confounded at the filthy state of thy conscience, and terrified at the thought of the awful judgment to come, thou art beginning to sink into the bottomless gulf of sadness and to be absorbed in the abyss of despair, oh, then think of Mary! In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from thy lips, never suffer it to leave thy heart. And that thou mayest more surely obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, thou shalt never go astray; whilst invoking her, thou shalt never lose heart; so long as she is in thy mind, thou art safe from deception; whilst she holds thy hand, thou canst not fall; under her protection, thou hast nothing to fear; if she walks before thee, thou shalt not grow weary; if she shows thee favour, thou shalt reach the goal. And thus thou shalt experience in thyself the truth of what is written, "And the Virgin's name was Mary."* But here we must pause for a

* Compare the following eloquent passage from Cardinal Newman :—

"O my dear children, young men and young women, what need have you of the intercession of the Virgin Mother, of her help, of her pattern! What shall bring you forward in the narrow way, if you live in the world, but the thought and patronage of Mary? What shall seal your senses, what shall tranquillise your heart, when sights and sounds of danger are around you, but the thought of Mary? What shall give you patience and endurance when you are wearied out with the

brief space, in order that we may contemplate a while the splendour of so grand a luminary. For, to use the words of the Apostle Peter, "it is good for us to be here"; and I prefer the delight of gazing in silence upon that which no laboured eloquence can sufficiently describe. Besides, the devout contemplation of this resplendent star shall enable me to address myself with increased fervour to the other discussions which are to follow.

length of the conflict with evil, with the unceasing necessity of precautions, with the irksomeness of observing them, with the tediousness of their repetition, with the strain upon your mind, with your forlorn and cheerless condition, but a loving communion with her? She will comfort you in your discouragements, solace you in your fatigue, raise you up after your falls, reward you for your successes. She will show you her Son, your God and your all. When your spirit within you is excited, or relaxed, or depressed, when it loses its balance, when it is restless and wayward, when it is sick of what it has and hankers after what it has not, when your eye is solicited with evil, and your mortal frame trembles under the shadow of the Tempter, what will bring you to yourselves, to peace and to health, but the cool breath of the Immaculate and the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon?"—*Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, pp. 400-401.

THIRD SERMON ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

"*And the Angel, being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; Blessed art thou among women.*
" *Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.*
" *And so the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.*
" *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus.*
" *He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His Father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever.*"—Luke i. 28–32.

I am always glad to borrow the language of the saints, whenever I find that it suits my purpose, in the hope that at least the beauty of the expression may commend to my readers or hearers the thoughts which I desire to communicate. Hence I begin this discourse by saying with the Prophet, " Woe is me," not indeed because, like Isaias, " I have held my peace," but because I have spoken, " for I am a man of unclean lips." Alas for me! What words of vanity, of deceit, and of shame do I not remember to have vomited forth from this most filthy mouth of mine with which I now presume to speak the language of heaven! I am very much afraid that I shall soon hear addressed to me these words of reproof, " Why dost thou declare My justices and take My covenant in thy mouth?" Would to God that I were presented, not as the Prophet, with a single live coal from the heavenly altar, but with an immense volume of flame, which might suffice to burn out completely the thick and inveterate rust

of sin that covers my restless tongue! So should I, perhaps, be deemed worthy to comment in my own poor discourse on the words of modesty and sweetness interchanged between the Angel and the Virgin. Well. The Evangelist proceeds, "And the Angel being come in, said unto her—that is, unto Mary—Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." In whither did Gabriel come? In my opinion, it was into the privacy of her modest bed-chamber, where, perhaps, having shut the door upon herself, she was praying to the Father in secret. For the angels are wont to draw nigh to us when we pray, and to rejoice at the prayer we make with pure hands raised up to heaven. It is a pleasure for them to offer to God, as an odour of sweetness, the holocaust of our fervent devotion. And how pleasing in the sight of the Most High were the prayers of Mary, Gabriel indicated by the reverence with which he saluted her on entering. Nor was it difficult for the Angel to pass through the closed door into the Virgin's chamber, for in virtue of that subtlety which is a property of his spiritual nature, he could go whithersoever he pleased without experiencing any impediment, even from the obstruction of iron bars. Walls are not an obstacle to the flight of angelic spirits, nothing visible can hinder their movements, and there is no material substance, howsoever solid and dense it may be, which is not pervious and penetrable to them. We must not suppose, therefore, that Gabriel found the door of the Virgin's chamber ajar, since we know how anxious she was to shun the society of men and to avoid useless conversation, in order thus to preserve that silence so conducive to prayer, and to preclude the risk of temptation. And so at that hour, Mary, as a most prudent

virgin, had her door closed, not however against angels, but only to men. Therefore, whilst beyond the reach of every man, she was easily accessible to Gabriel.

The Angel, accordingly, " being come in said to her : Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." We read in the Acts of the Apostles that Stephen also was full of grace, and that the apostles were full of the Holy Ghost, but very differently from Mary. For Stephen had not, like her, the fulness of the Divinity dwelling in him corporally, nor were the apostles, as was she, so full of the Holy Ghost as to conceive by Him. And the Angel " said to her : Hail, full of grace." What wonder that she was full of grace since the Lord was with her ? It is this that should rather surprise us, how He Who had sent the Angel to the Virgin was found by the same Angel to be with the Virgin. Shall we then suppose that God came down more swiftly than Gabriel, and by His greater celerity outstripped His hurrying envoy in the descent from heaven to earth ? But neither is there matter for wonder in this. For " while the King was at His repose," the Virgin's " spikenard sent forth the odour thereof," and the smoke of her aromatical spices ascended to the presence of His glory, and found favour in the sight of the Lord, the whole heavenly court crying out in admiration, " Who is she that goeth up by the desert as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer ? " The King immediately " went forth from His holy place " and " rejoiced as a giant to run the way " ; and although " His going out is from the highest heaven," yet, flying with the wings of ardent affection, He outdistanced His messenger and was the first to

reach the Virgin whom He loved, whom He had chosen, whose beauty He desired. It is this approach of His that the Church contemplates from afar when she exclaims with joy and exultation, "Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills."

Not without cause did the King desire the Virgin's beauty. For she had done that which her father, the Prophet David, had so long before recommended, saying to her in the Spirit, "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house." (And then, when thou hast acted thus) "the King shall greatly desire thy beauty." The Virgin, therefore, hearkened and saw: not like some, who hear without heeding, and see without understanding; because in her case hearing resulted in faith and sight in comprehension. She also inclined her ear to obedience and her heart to instruction; and she forgot her people and her father's house. She forgot her people, for the increase of whom by marriage she had no solicitude; and she forgot her father's house, since she had bound herself by vow not to leave it an heir. But whatever of temporal honour she could have had amongst her people, whatever of earthly riches from her father's house, she counted it all as dross that so she might gain Christ. And her desire was most fully accomplished, when, without prejudice to her vow of virginity, she obtained Christ for her Son. Rightly, therefore, is she pronounced full of grace who, endowed already with the grace of integrity, was now to add thereto the glory of fecundity.

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Notice how the Angel did not say "The Lord is *in* thee," but "the Lord is *with* thee." For God, Who by the

simplicity of His Essence is equally and entirely everywhere present, has nevertheless, by His influence and operation, a presence in His rational creatures, which He has not in others, and amongst the former, a presence in the good different from that which He has in the wicked. He is truly present in irrational creatures, yet without being embraced by them. He is in His rational creatures in such a manner that they all have the power to embrace Him by knowledge, yet only the good by love. Consequently, of the good alone it can be said that He is so in them as to be also with them, because of the harmony of their wills with His. For whilst they so conform their wills to the law of justice that it is not unworthy of God to will what they will, there is established a concord between His will and theirs, and thus they become specially united with Him. But although this is the case with every holy soul, it is particularly true of Mary. So close was the union He contracted with her, that He united to Himself not only her will, but even her flesh ; and from His own Substance and the substance of the Virgin He fashioned one Christ, or rather He became one Christ, Who, although neither wholly from God nor wholly from Mary, yet belongs wholly to God and wholly to Mary : nor are there two sons, but the one same Christ is Son of both. The Angel says, therefore, " Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." But, O Mary, the Lord with thee is not the Son alone Whom thou hast clothed with thy flesh : He is also the Holy Spirit, by Whom thou hast conceived, and He is also the Father by Whom from eternity thy Child is begotten. The Father, I say, is with thee, Who has given His Son to be also thine. The Son is

with thee, Who in a marvellous way has entered thy womb without detriment to thy virginity. The Holy Ghost is with thee, Who, with the Father and the Son, has prepared thy virginal body to be the dwelling of the Word. Therefore "the Lord is with thee."

"Blessed art thou among women." To these words, spoken both by the Angel and afterwards by Elizabeth, I will join these others which the latter added, "And blessed is the Fruit of thy womb." It is not because thou, O Virgin, art blessed that therefore the Fruit of thy womb is blessed, but on the contrary, therefore art thou blessed, because He "hath prevented thee with the blessings of sweetness." Truly blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, for "in Him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed," and it is of His fulness thou also, His Mother, hast received with the rest, although differently from the rest. And therefore art thou also blessed, yet only among women: whereas He is blessed, not alone amongst men, not alone amongst angels, but absolutely, since He is the Same Who, according to the Apostle, "is over all things, God blessed for ever." We speak of blessed men, and blessed women, and blessed bread, and blessed earth, and other creatures also are said to be blessed: but uniquely blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, "Who is over all things, God blessed for ever."

Therefore, "blessed is the Fruit of thy womb," blessed in His odour, blessed in His taste, and blessed in His beauty. Long ago the Patriarch Isaac inhaled the perfume of this fragrant Fruit, when he cried out: "Behold the smell of my Son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed." Surely He is blessed indeed, Who hath been blessed by the

Lord. And concerning the flavour of this Fruit, the Psalmist after enjoying it, broke forth into song and said, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is sweet," and, "Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!" And to the same the Apostle Peter thus refers, "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet." Yea, the Fruit Himself, inviting us to Him, declares, "They that eat Me, shall yet hunger; and they that drink Me shall yet thirst." He speaks thus, no doubt, on account of the sweetness of His taste, which, when once experienced, rather excites than appeases the appetite. That certainly is a noble Fruit, Which becomes the food and the drink of those who hunger and thirst after justice. I have spoken of the odour of this Fruit, and I have spoken of His taste: listen now to what I have to say about His beauty. For if the fruit of death was not only pleasing to the palate but also, as the Scripture bears witness, "delightful to behold," with how much greater eagerness should we not turn to contemplate the beauty of that life-giving Fruit "on Whom the angels desire to look"? This beauty David beheld in the Spirit and longed to see in the flesh, since he said of it, "Out of Sion the loveliness of His beauty." And lest you should consider this but a slight commendation, recollect what is written in another psalm, "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad on Thy lips: therefore hath God blessed Thee for ever."

"Blessed," then, O Mother, "is the Fruit of thy Womb," since God hath blessed Him for ever. And it is from the fulness of His blessing that thou thyself art blessed among women, because "an evil tree cannot

bring forth good fruit." "Blessed," I say, "art thou among women," who alone of women hast escaped not only that general curse pronounced against Eve in Paradise, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," but this other also, "Cursed be she that is barren in Israel";* and hast instead obtained the singular blessing whereby thou art made a mother without the penalty to bring forth in pain. O cruel necessity and heavy yoke upon all the hapless daughters of Eve! If they become mothers they shall suffer anguish, and if they remain sterile they shall be accurst. The pain debars them from motherhood, the malediction from sterility. What wilt thou do, O prudent Virgin, who hast heard and read of this? Affliction awaits thee, if thou bringest forth; if thou remainest barren, the curse. Which, then, wilt thou choose, O prudent Virgin? "I am straitened," she seems to say, "on every side. Yet it it is better for me to incur the malediction by remaining a virgin, than to conceive by concupiscence and to bring forth in pain. On this side I behold a curse indeed, yet no sin; on that I see both sin † and torment. Moreover, what is this curse but the reproach of men? For on no other account is she that is sterile declared accursed than because she is held up to scorn and contempt as being useless and unprofitable, and that in Israel only. 'But for me it is a very small thing' to incur the displeasure of men, provided I can present

* These exact words are not found in the Vulgate. In Exodus xxiii. 26, we read, "There shall not be one fruitless nor barren in thy land"; and in Deuteronomy vii. 14, "No one shall be barren among you of either sex."—(Translator.)

† Sin is taken here in the same sense in which the Apostle understands it where he says, "Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 20), that is to say, for concupiscence.—(Translator.)

myself 'a chaste virgin to Christ.'" O Virgin most prudent, most devoted, who has told thee that virginity is pleasing to God? What law, what commandment, what page of the Old Testament either enjoins, or counsels, or exhorts men to live in the flesh without living according to the flesh, and to emulate on earth the life of the angels? Where, O happy Virgin, hast thou read that "the wisdom of the flesh is death"? or "Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences"? Where hast thou read of virgins that they shall sing a new canticle which none but they can sing, and shall "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth"? Where hast thou read the eulogium pronounced on them "who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven"? Where hast thou read that, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh"? or, "Both he that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well, and he that giveth her not doth better"? Where hast thou read, "I would that all men were even as myself"? or, "It is good for a man if he so continue (in virginity) according to my counsel"? or, "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel"? Thou hast had neither counsel, nor command, nor example to guide thee, but "His (Christ's) unction hath taught thee of all things," and the Word of God, "living and effectual," has been thy Master before He became thy Son, and instructed thy mind before assuming thy flesh. Thou hast vowed, therefore, to present thyself a chaste virgin to Christ, not knowing that thou wert also destined to present thyself to Him to be His Mother. Thou hast chosen to be contemptible in Israel, and, in order to please

Him to Whom thou hast devoted thyself, thou art content to incur the malediction pronounced against the sterile. But behold, the curse is changed into a blessing, and the purpose of barrenness is rewarded with motherhood.*

Prepare thyself now, O Virgin, expand thy breast and open thy bosom, "because He That is mighty" is going to do great things for thee, so that, instead of being accursed in Israel, "all generations shall call thee blessed." And fear not, O prudent Virgin, the fruitfulness offered thee, because it shall leave thy virginity inviolate. Thou shalt conceive, yet without concupiscence; thou shall be pregnant, yet not burdened; thou shalt bring forth, yet not with sadness; thou shalt be a mother, yet know not man. But of whom shalt thou be mother? Thou shalt be the Mother of Him Who has God for His Father. The Son of the Father's glory shall be the Crown of thy virginity. The Wisdom of the Father's Heart shall be the Fruit of thy virginal womb. In a word, thou shalt bring forth God and conceive by God. Be of good cheer, therefore, fruitful Virgin, chaste childbearer (*puerpera*), Mother undefiled, because thou shalt

* "Though all Jewish women in each successive age had been hoping to be the Mother of the Christ, so that marriage was honourable among them, celibacy a reproach, she alone had put aside the desire and the thought of so great a dignity. She alone who was to bear the Christ refused to bear Him; He stooped to her, she turned from Him; and why? because she had been inspired, the first of womankind, to dedicate her virginity to God, and she did not welcome a privilege which seemed to involve a forfeiture of her vow. How shall this be, she asked, seeing I am separate from man? Nor, till the Angel told her that the conception would be miraculous and from the Holy Ghost, did she put aside her trouble of mind, recognise him securely as God's messenger, and bow her head in awe and thankfulness to God's condescension."—Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, pp. 372-373.

no longer be accursed in Israel, or reputed with the barren. And if thou shalt continue to be cursed by those who are Israelites according to the flesh, not because they judge thee sterile, but from envy of thy fruitfulness, remember that Christ also endured the curse of the cross, and has blessed thee, His Mother, in the glory of heaven. Yea, even on earth thou art declared blessed by the Angel, and all generations of men shall justly call thee blessed. Therefore, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb."

"Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself, what manner of salutation this should be." Virgins, who are truly such, are wont to be always fearful, and can never feel secure. And in their anxiety to avoid all real danger, they tremble at what is only an appearance. For they know that they carry their precious treasure 'in earthen vessels," and that it is extremely difficult to live as angels amongst men, to lead on earth the life proper to heaven, and to live in the flesh without living according to the flesh. And consequently every strange event, every unexpected occurrence, at once arouses their suspicions: they are afraid of a trap, they conclude it is all an attempt against themselves. Hence Mary was troubled at the Angel's greeting. She was troubled, I say, but not confounded. "I was troubled," sings the Psalmist, "and I spoke not," but "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in mind the eternal years." In the same way, then, was Mary troubled and she spoke not, but "thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be." That she was troubled came from her virginal modesty; that she was not

confounded was due to her fortitude, whilst it was under the influence of her prudence that she held her peace and reflected. "She was troubled and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be." The prudent Virgin was well aware that the angel of darkness often transforms himself into an angel of light; and as she was humble and simple, she could not believe that any holy angel would greet her thus. And therefore she "thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be."

Then the Angel, looking upon the Virgin, and easily perceiving that she is revolving anxious thoughts in her mind, consoles her timidity, dissipates her doubts, and familiarly addressing her by her name, tells her kindly not to be afraid. "Fear not, Mary," he says, "for thou hast found grace with God. There is here no guile and no deception. Do not suspect any artifice or treachery in me, because I am not a man but a spirit, and an angel not of Satan but of God. Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Oh, if thou knewest how pleasing thy humility is to the Most High and what a sublime throne of glory awaits thee in His kingdom! Then thou wouldst no longer deem thyself unworthy to be saluted and served by angels. For how canst thou regard as undue to thee the love and devotion of the angels, seeing that thou hast found grace with God? Thou hast found what thou hast been seeking, thou hast found what no one before thee has been able to find: 'thou hast found grace with God.' And what is this grace which thou hast found? It is the reconciliation of men with God, the destruction of death, and the restoration of life. Yes, such is the grace thou hast found with God.

'And this shall be a sign to thee': 'behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus.' From the very name of the Son promised thee, thou mayest understand, O prudent Virgin, how precious and how extraordinary is the grace which thou hast found with God. 'And thou shalt call His name Jesus.'" The same Angel who spoke these words, gave also the meaning of that name, as another Evangelist records, (Matth. i. 21), interpreting it thus, "for He shall save His people from their sins."

I have read of two others who, as types of Him Whom the Angel here announces, bore the name of Jesus and ruled in Israel. One of them led the people home from Babylon, whilst the other brought them into the land of promise. Both of these did indeed defend those under them against the attacks of their enemies, but did they save them from their sins? No, it is only our Jesus Who can save His people from their sins and bring them into the land of the living. "For He shall save His people from their sins." "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Oh, that the Lord Jesus in spite of my unworthiness would vouchsafe to count even me in the number of His people, that so I might be saved from my sins! Truly "happy is that people whose God is the Lord" Jesus, because "He shall save his people from their sins." Yet there are many, I fear, who proclaim themselves to belong to His people, but whom He does not acknowledge. I fear there are many, even amongst those who seem outwardly to be the most devoted of His people, of whom nevertheless He is compelled to say, "This people honoureth Me with their lips: but their heart is

far from Me." For "the Lord (Jesus) knoweth who are His" in truth. He knows also whom He has chosen from the beginning. "Why," He asks of some, "call you Me Lord, Lord: and do not the things which I say?" Dost thou wish to know whether or not thou belongest to His people? Or rather dost thou desire to belong to His people? * If so, do the things which Jesus says, and He will number thee with His people. Do what the Lord Jesus commands in the Gospel, what He commands in the law and the prophets, what He commands by His ministers in the Church; be obedient to His representatives, thy superiors, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward," and learn from Jesus Himself to be meek and humble of heart; and then thou shalt be associated to that blessed people, to "the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance": thou shalt be of the noble people "whom the Lord of Hosts hath blessed, saying, Thou art the work of My hands, Israel is My inheritance." † And concerning the same people (lest thou shouldst grow envious of those who are Israelites according to the flesh) He adds this other testimony, "A people whom I knew not hath served Me: at the hearing of the ear they have obeyed Me."

But let us hear now what the Angel thinks of Him to Whom, before He is yet conceived, he has given a

* "Vis scire an pertineas ad populum Ejus? Vel potius vis esse de populo Ejus? Fac quae dicit Jesus, et computabit te in populo suo." These words recall the saying attributed to St. Augustine, "Si non es praedestinatus, fac ut praedestineris," and prove beyond the possibility of a doubt that St. Bernard subscribed to no theory of absolute and antecedent predestination. See also the note at page 249, vol. i., of the *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*.—(Translator.)

† This appears to be a reading of Isaias xix. 25, but differs materially from both Septuagint and the Vulgate.—(Translator.)

name so noble. "He shall be great," he says, "and shall be called the Son of the Most High." Great indeed must be He Who shall deserve to be called the Son of the Most High. Has He not a right to be called great "of Whose greatness" according to the Psalmist, "there is no end"? And, as the same Prophet elsewhere asks, "Who is the great God like our God?" Truly great is He Who is as great as He is high, and Who is the Most High. For the Son of the Most High "thinks it not robbery to be equal" to the Most High. But *he* certainly must be judged to have been guilty of robbery, who, having been elevated from nothingness to the angelic dignity, compared himself to his Maker, and attempted to usurp the prerogative of the Son of the Most High, the Son, not made, but begotten by God the Father, as being Himself in the form of God. For God the Father, although Most High, although omnipotent, can nevertheless neither produce a creature equal to Himself, nor generate a Son inferior to Himself. He made Lucifer great indeed, yet not so great as He is Himself and therefore not most high. The Only-Begotten Son alone, Who has not been made, proceeds by generation omnipotent from the Omnipotent, most high from the Most High, eternal from the Eternal, Nor does the Father think it robbery or injurious to His glory that such a Son should be equal to Him in all things. Well, therefore, is it said that He shall be great Who shall be called the Son of the Most High.

But why does the Angel say that He shall be great, and not rather that He is great? For He is always equally great and has no capacity for growth in greatness: He shall not be anything greater after

conception than He is now, or than He has been in His eternal past. Perhaps the future tense is used to indicate that He Who is already the great God is about to become great also as man. If this be so, Gabriel speaks truly when he says, "He shall be great," that is, a great Man, a great Doctor, a great Prophet; for such He is declared to be in the Gospel. Thus we read how the people said of Him, "A great Prophet is risen up among us." And a certain lesser prophet promised that He would come as a great Prophet, saying, "Behold a great Prophet shall come, and He shall restore Jerusalem." As for thee, O Virgin, thou shalt bring Him forth as a Little One, thou shalt nurse Him as a Little One, thou shalt suckle Him as a Little One: but looking on His littleness, think of His greatness. For He shall be great, because God will magnify Him in the sight of princes so that "all the kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him." Let thy soul, therefore, "magnify the Lord," because "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High." He shall be great, and "He That is mighty shall do great things to thee; and holy is His name." For what name can be more holy than that which He is to be called, the Son of the Most High? And let us also, who are little, magnify the great Lord, Who in order that we might be made great, has made Himself little. "A Child is born to us," says the Prophet, "and a Son is given to us." He is born, I say, for us, not for Himself: He Who is eternally and far more nobly born of the Father had no need for Himself of this temporal birth of a mother. Neither is it for the angels that He is born, because they possess Him already as great, and hence do not need Him as

little. Therefore for us alone the Child is born and to us He is given, since to us alone is He necessary.

So let us now employ Him Who is born for us and given to us for the purpose for which He is born and given. Let us use Him Who is our own for our own advantage. Let us work out our salvation by means of the Saviour.* Behold a Little One is placed in our midst.† O Little One desirable to little ones! O Little One truly! but only little in malice, not in wisdom.‡ Let us endeavour to become like this Little One. Let us learn of Him because He is "meek and humble of heart." Otherwise the great God will have become a Little One in vain, in vain will have died, in vain will have endured the cross. Let us learn His humility, let us imitate His meekness, let us respond to His charity, let us share in His sufferings, let us cleanse ourselves in His Blood. Yea, let us offer Him as a "propitiation for our sins," because unto this is He born and given to us. Let us offer Him to the eyes of the Father: let us offer Him to His own eyes also: for the Father hath "spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and the Son hath "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant"; "He hath delivered His Soul unto death and was reputed with the wicked, and He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors," so that they might not perish. *They* cannot perish for

* "Utamur nostro in nostram utilitatem; de Salvatore salutem operemur."

† "And Jesus, calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them."—Matth. xviii. 2.

‡ Allusion to 1 Cor. xiv. 20: "Brethren, do not become children in sense, but in malice be children, and in sense perfect."

whom the Son prays the Father that they may be saved, and for whom, that they may live, the Father delivered His Son to death. Pardon, therefore, is to be hoped for equally from Father and Son, Who are equal in mercy and loving-kindness, equal in omnipotence of will, identical in the Essence of their Divinity, in Which, with the Holy Spirit, They live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FOURTH SERMON ON THE GLORIES OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

" And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father : and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever,
" And of His Kingdom there shall be no end.
" And Mary said to the Angel : How shall this be done, because I know not man ?
" And the Angel answering said to her : The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.
" And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age ; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren ;
" Because no word shall be impossible with God.
" And Mary said : Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word."—Luke i. 32–38.

It is clear that the praise which we offer to the Mother redounds to the honour of the Son, and, conversely, when we glorify the Son we are at the same time honouring the Mother. For if, according to Solomon, " A wise son is the glory of his father," how much more glorious is it to be made the Mother of Him Who is Wisdom Itself ! But what shall I say in commendation of her whose glories have been foretold by the prophets, announced by the Angel, recorded by the Evangelist ? I shall not, therefore, because I dare not, attempt a eulogy of my own : I shall only repeat with devout affection that which the Evangelist has already proclaimed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Continuing, then, we read, " And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of David His father." These also are the words of the Angel to the Virgin concerning the promised Son, assuring her that He is

destined to obtain the kingdom of David. There is no doubt that the Lord Jesus truly belongs to the lineage of the Prophet King. But I ask, how did God give Him the throne of His father David, seeing that He never reigned in Jerusalem, aye, and even when the multitude on one occasion wished to make Him king, He would not consent? Indeed, He distinctly affirmed before the face of Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. Besides, it is surely nothing great to predict of Him Who "sitteth upon the Cherubims," Whom the Prophet Isaias saw "sitting upon a throne, high and elevated," that He should sit upon the throne of David, His father. But we know of another Jerusalem, typified by that earthly Jerusalem wherein David ruled, and far surpassing it in nobility and wealth. I think, therefore, that it is of this there is here question, according to the figure of speech so often met with in the Sacred Writings, by which the type is put for the thing typified. It was then, manifestly, that the Lord gave Him the throne of His father David, when, as the Psalmist tells us, He (Christ) was "appointed King by Him over Sion, His holy mountain." And this Prophet seems to explain clearly to what kingdom he is referring by the fact that he does not say "in Sion" but "over (*super*) Sion." For the reason why he uses the expression "over Sion" instead of "in Sion" seems to be this, that whereas David reigned *in* Sion, *over* Sion is the kingdom of Him of Whom God said to David, "Of the fruit of thy womb I will set over thy throne," and of Whom it was predicted by another prophet, "He shall sit over the throne of David, and over his kingdom." Do you not notice how the word "over" (*super*) is everywhere occurring?

We have "over Sion," and "over thy throne," and "over his kingdom."* Therefore, "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father," not the typical throne but the true, not the temporal but the eternal, not the earthly but the heavenly. And this is said to be the throne of David, because, as I have already remarked, it was prefigured by that temporal throne on which David sat in Sion.

"And He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end." Here again, if the Angel be understood as referring to the temporal house of Jacob, it may well be asked how shall He reign for ever in a house which is not eternal? We have consequently to seek for an eternal house of Jacob, in which He shall reign for ever, of Whose "kingdom there shall be no end." For was He not impiously denied and foolishly rejected by that earthly and provoking house, before the face of Pilate, to whose question, "Shall I crucify your King?" they all, with one accord, cried out in answer, "We have no king but Cæsar"? Inquire, therefore, of the Apostle, and he will distinguish for thee between the Jew "that is so outwardly" and the Jew "that is one inwardly," between the circumcision "which is outward in the flesh" and the circumcision which is "in the spirit," between the spiritual Israel and the carnal, between the sons of Abraham's faith and the children of his flesh. "For," he declares, "all are not Israelites that

* "Super Sion, super sedem, super solium, super regnum." In order to preserve the Saint's meaning, I have uniformly translated "super" by "over," even where the Douay Version, renders it "upon." For to St. Bernard's mind the words "De fructu ventris tui ponam super sedem tuam" are not a promise that the Messias should occupy the throne of David, but a throne above it in heaven.—(Translator.)

are of Israel; neither are all they that are the seed of Abraham, children." Continue, then, according to this, and say, "similarly not all who are of Jacob are to be reputed of the house of Jacob." For Jacob and Israel are one and the same. Therefore consider none to belong to the house of Jacob except such as are found to be perfect in the faith of Jacob; or rather recognise these as the spiritual and eternal house of Jacob, in which the Lord Jesus shall reign for ever. Where is the man amongst us who, according to the signification of the name Jacob, supplants the devil in his heart and struggles against his vices and concupiscences, so that sin may not reign in his mortal body, but that, instead, Jesus may reign in him, here by grace and hereafter by glory? Oh, how blessed is he in whom Jesus shall reign for ever, because he also shall reign with Jesus, "and of his kingdom there shall be no end"! Oh, how glorious is that kingdom in which "the kings of the earth shall assemble themselves and gather together" in order to praise and magnify Him Who is above all, "King of kings and Lord of lords," from the contemplation of Whose divine splendour "the just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"! Oh, if only the Lord Jesus would remember sinful me "in the favour of His people" when He comes into His kingdom! Oh, if on that day when He is to "deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father," He would condescend to "visit (me) with His salvation, that (I) may see the good of His chosen, that (I) may rejoice in the joy of His nation, that He may be praised with His inheritance" even by me! Meantime, "come, Lord Jesus," and remove all scandals from Thy kingdom, which is

my poor soul, so that Thou Who art her rightful King, mayest reign in her. For avarice has entered and claims me for its own: vainglory desires to rule over me; pride wishes to be my king; sensuality says, "I will reign"; ambition, envy, jealousy, and anger contend in me concerning myself, as to which of them shall have the greatest power over me. I resist them as well as I can: I struggle against them according as I am assisted by grace, I proclaim that the Lord Jesus is my only King. For Him I defend myself, because I acknowledge myself to be His subject. I adhere to Him as my Lord and my God, and I declare that I have no king but the Lord Jesus. Come, then, O Lord, and "scatter them by Thy power," that so Thou alone mayest reign in me, because "Thou art Thyself my King and my God, Who commandest the saving of Jacob."

"And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?" At first she prudently held her peace, whilst, still in doubt, she "thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be"; for, being humble, she chose rather to answer nothing at all than rashly to say what she knew not. But now she has pondered the matter well and has been comforted, the Angel reassuring her exteriorly and God encouraging her interiorly—for He too is present to her, as the Angel has testified, saying, "The Lord is with thee." Therefore, being thus fortified, and having conquered fear by faith, and maidenly reserve by gladness, she asks the Angel, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" It is not that she doubts the fact: she only inquires concerning the means and the manner. For she does not ask "whether shall this be done?" but, "How shall this

be done?" As if she should say, "Since my Lord, Who is the witness of my conscience, knows that His handmaid has vowed to preserve her virginity, by what means and in what manner is He pleased that this be done? Should it be necessary to set aside my vow, in order to become the Mother of so great a Son, I shall rejoice indeed because of the Son, but I shall grieve at having to sacrifice my virginity: however, may His will be done. But if I am to conceive as a virgin and to bring forth as a virgin,—which, if He so please, is certainly within His power to accomplish—then I shall know in truth that 'He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.'"*

"How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the Angel answering said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." Already she has been declared full of grace; and now it is said to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." But how can she be full of grace without having the Holy Ghost, since He is the Giver of all graces? And if the Holy Ghost is already within her, what means this promise of Him, as if He is to come upon heranew? Perhaps we have the explanation of this difficulty in the fact that the Angel does not simply say, "the Holy Ghost shall *come* into thee" (*veniet in te*), but, "the Holy Ghost shall '*supervene*' *upon* thee" (*superveniet in te*); because He has come to her before with an abundance of grace, and now it is announced that He shall "supervene," on account of the fulness and super-

* Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. in Lucam*, c. i. 34; also St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxx. a. 3.

abundance of grace which He is prepared to pour down upon her. But again, if she is already full of grace, how is she capable of receiving more? And if she has this capacity for further grace, how can she be said to be already full? Shall we suppose that the first fulness has filled her soul whilst the second is intended to fill her womb, so that the plenitude of the Divinity which even now dwells in her spiritually, as it has dwelt in many other holy persons, shall begin to dwell in her corporally also, a privilege accorded to no other saint?

The Angel therefore says, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." What does he mean by the words, "And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee"? Let him who can, comprehend them. But is there any creature—except perhaps her who alone merited to have in herself this most blessed experience—is there, I ask, any creature capable of comprehending with his intellect or of discerning by his reason how the inaccessible Splendour of the Godhead poured Itself into the Virgin's womb, and how of that small portion of her body which It animated and united hypostatically to Itself, It made a shadow, as it were, for her whole being, in order that she might be able to endure the approach and the presence of such intolerable brightness? And possibly for this reason in particular it was said to her, "The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," because, namely, the matter was thus shadowed in mystery, and because the knowledge of what the Blessed Trinity was pleased to accomplish, of Itself alone and directly, in and with the Virgin alone, was to be communicated to

none except her to whom alone was to be granted the experience. In this sense, then, (as I suppose), the Angel said to her, " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee "—in order by His presence to make thee fruitful, " and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee," that is, " the manner in which thou shalt conceive by the Holy Ghost shall be so veiled and covered and overshadowed in His most secret counsel by Christ, the Wisdom and Power of God, that none shall have knowledge of it save Him and thee." It was as if Gabriel had answered the Virgin thus: " Wherefore askest thou me concerning that which thou art soon to experience in thyself? Thou shalt know, thou shalt know, I say, and the knowledge shall fill thee with happiness: but none can instruct thee in this mystery except Him Who is its Author. My mission is not to effect but only to announce to thee thy virginal conception. And how this is to be accomplished, as it cannot be made known except by Him Who shall accomplish it, so neither can it be learned except by her in whom it shall be accomplished. And therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. That is to say, since it is not by man thou shalt conceive, but by the Holy Ghost, and since thou shalt conceive the Son of God, Who is the Power of the Most High, therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. I mean by this, that not only He Who (as being the Power of God) shall come from the Father's Bosom into thy womb and overshadow thee, but also whatever He shall unite to Himself of thy substance shall be called the Son of God: just as, on the other hand, He Who is born of the Father before all ages shall

be reputed henceforth thy Son also. But in such a way shall the Son Who is born of the Father be thy Son, and the Son born of thee be the Son of the Father, that nevertheless there shall not be two Sons but one. And although there is an infinite difference between the Flesh Which this Son obtains from thee and the Divinity Which He derives from the Father, He shall not be only in part thy Son, and in part the Father's, but wholly and entirely the same Son of both thee and the Father." *

"And therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Notice with what reverence the Angel said, "the Holy Which shall be born of thee." For wherefore did he speak of "the Holy" thus simply and without addition? The reason is, as I believe, because he had no proper and suitable name for that most excellent, most magnificent, most venerable Something Which was to be taken from the Virgin's spotless flesh, and (with Its Soul) to be united to the Only-Begotten of the Father. Had he called It "the holy Flesh," or "the Sacred Humanity," or "the holy Infant," he would have seemed to himself

* That is to say, Christ is not merely the (natural) Son of God according to His Divinity and the Son of Mary according to His Humanity, but He is the Son of both His Father and His Mother according to His whole Self as the Word incarnate.

"She (Mary) is not merely the Mother of Our Lord's manhood, or of Our Lord's Body, but she is also to be considered the Mother of the Word Himself, the Word incarnate. God in the Person of the Word, the Second Person of the All-glorious Trinity, humbled Himself to become her Son. 'Non horruisti Virginis uterum,' as the Church sings, 'Thou didst not shrink from the Virgin's womb.' He took the substance of His Human Flesh from her, and clothed in It lay within her, and He bore It about with Him after birth as a sort of badge and witness that He, though God, was hers."—Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, p. 383.

Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum Theol.*, III. q. xxxv. a. 4-5.—(Translator.)

to be speaking of It unworthily. He therefore referred to It indefinitely as "the Holy," because whatever That might be which was to be born of the Virgin, It was certainly Something holy and singularly holy, by the sanctification of the Spirit and by Its personal union with the Word.

"And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age." Why was it necessary to announce to the Virgin that her hitherto sterile cousin had also conceived? Is it that she was still perhaps doubtful, still hesitating to assent to the heavenly oracle, and therefore the Angel desired to convince her by the evidence of this other wonder? God forbid! We read of how Zachary's incredulity was punished by this same Angel, but nowhere do we find him reproving Mary for anything: rather we hear Elizabeth in the spirit of prophecy commending her faith and saying, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." No, the true reason why her cousin's pregnancy was announced to the Virgin was in order that her joy might be multiplied by hearing of such a succession of prodigies. For it was necessary that she, who was destined soon in the joy of the Holy Ghost to conceive the Son of the Father's charity, should be prevented and flooded with an unprecedented inundation of gladness and love; because it was only the most loving and the most joyous of hearts that could contain Him Who is the infinite Treasure of divine love and sweetness. Or perhaps for this reason was Elizabeth's pregnancy made known to Mary, because it was manifestly fitting that the Virgin should hear from the Angel before learning

from men a fact which was soon to be everywhere published. Otherwise it would have been thought that the Mother of God was excluded from the counsels of her Son, if she were kept in ignorance of what was taking place so near her on the earth. Or again, Mary may have been informed of her cousin's condition, to the end that, being notified now of the Saviour's, and now of the Precursor's coming, she might the better remember the time and order of the events, and so be better able to make known the truth afterwards to the apostles and evangelists, as one who had been fully and supernaturally enlightened concerning all these mysteries from the beginning. Or, finally, the purpose of telling the Virgin that Elizabeth had conceived may have been this: that the news of the elder cousin's condition might remind the younger of the claims of charity; so that the Virgin's hasty journey to the hill country to visit her kinswoman might afford the unborn Prophet an opportunity of rendering the first-fruits of his service to His still younger Lord; and that, whilst the meeting of mothers and infants excited the joyous devotion of all, wonders should be followed by wonders more astonishing.

But, O Virgin, do not entertain the hope that these magnificent promises which thou hast heard from the Angel are to be fulfilled by him. And if thou wouldst know by whom, then, they shall be accomplished, attend to what the Angel adds, "Because no word shall be impossible with God." As if he should say, "For the fulfilment of the promises which I have faithfully made to thee, I presume not on my own strength, but on the power of Him Who has sent me; because no word shall be impossible with God." For what word can be

impossible to Him Who has made all things by His Word? Nevertheless I should like to know why the Angel did not say, "because no *deed*" shall be impossible with God, instead of, "because no word." But perhaps he preferred the latter expression, because as easily as men can say what they will, even when they lack the power of accomplishment, with the same ease, nay, with incomparably greater ease, God is able to fulfil in act whatever can be expressed in speech. Let me put it more plainly. If it were as easy for men to accomplish as to say what they will, then for us also in the same way no deed would be impossible. As the case is, however, the familiar adage holds true, namely, that there is a wide difference between doing and saying, yet only for men, and not also for God. For God alone it is the same thing to do as to say, and the same thing to say as to will. Consequently, "no word shall be impossible with God." To take an example. The prophets were able to foresee and to foretell that the Virgin and her barren cousin would conceive and bring forth: yet surely they had not the power to bring to pass what they were capable of announcing. But God Who gave His prophets the gift of foresight, with the same ease with which He could predict what He pleased through them, could afterwards, when He chose, accomplish by Himself whatever He had promised. For with God there can be no discord between intention and promise, because He is Truth; nor between promise and accomplishment, because He is Power; nor between accomplishment and mode, because He is Wisdom. And consequently, "no word shall be impossible with God."

O happy Virgin! Thou hast heard what is to be

accomplished in thee, and what is to be the mode of accomplishment. Each is a matter for wonder, yet also and equally an occasion of joy. Therefore, "rejoice greatly, shout for joy, O Daughter of Jerusalem." And since "to thy hearing has been given joy and gladness," let us also hear from thee the reply of gladness which we so eagerly long for; and then "the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice." Thou hast heard, I say, what is to be accomplished in thee, and thou hast believed; believe also what has been explained to thee concerning the mode of accomplishment. Thou hast been told that thou shalt conceive and bear a Son: thou hast heard that this shall be not by man but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Behold the Angel now awaits thy answer: "it is time that he should return to the Lord Who sent him." We also, O Lady, await from thy lips the sentence of mercy and compassion, we who are so miserably groaning under the sentence of condemnation. For lo! the price of our salvation is now offered to thee: if thou wilt only consent, we shall at once be set at liberty. We have been created by the eternal Word of God, and behold we die: by thy momentary word we must be renewed and restored to life. O Virgin most loving, Adam, now exiled from Paradise with all his miserable offspring, implores this favour of thee. For this does Abraham entreat thee, for this David, for this all the other holy fathers, thine own ancestors, who are now dwelling in the region of the shadow of death. See, the whole world, prostrate at thy feet, awaits thy answer. And not without cause. For on thy word depend the consolation of the miserable, the redemption of the captives, the pardon of the condemned, the

salvation of all the children of Adam, of the entire human race. O Virgin, delay not to answer. Speak the word, O Lady, speak the word which all on earth, and all in limbo, yea, and even all in Paradise are waiting to hear. Christ Himself, the King and Lord of all, longs for thy answer with a longing equal to the ardour wherewith He "hath desired thy beauty," because it is by means of thy consent that He has decreed to save the world. Hitherto thou hast pleased Him by thy silence, but now thy speech shall give Him more pleasure. For behold He calls to thee from heaven, saying, "O fairest among women, let thy voice sound in My ears." Therefore if thou wilt give Him to hear thy voice, He will give thee to see our salvation. And is it not for this thou hast been supplicating, and sighing, and pouring out prayers with tears by day and by night? What then? Art thou she to whom this hath been promised "or look we for another?" Nay, thou thyself art she, and there is none other. Thou, I say, art she who has been promised, who has been expected, who has been yearned for, through whom the holy Patriarch Jacob hoped to receive eternal life, when, being now about to die, he exclaimed, "I will look for Thy salvation, O Lord." Thou art she in whom and by whom "God our King before the ages hath decreed to work salvation in the midst of the earth." Wherefore dost thou expect from another what is now offered to thyself? Why hopest thou to receive through another that which through thee shall be soon given to the world, provided only thou wilt consent and say the word? Make haste, therefore, to answer the Angel, or rather to answer the Lord through the Angel. Say the word

and receive the Word. Utter thy human word and conceive the Divine Word. Pronounce the transitory word and embrace the Word everlasting. Why dost thou hesitate? Wherefore dost thou fear? Believe, consent, and receive into thy womb the Word of the Father. Let thy humility take courage, let thy modesty be confident. It is in nowise expedient now that thy virginal simplicity should be forgetful of prudence. O Virgin most prudent, in this matter alone thou mayest put aside all fear of presumption, because although modesty pleases by its silence, yet more necessary for us now is the charity of speech. O happy Virgin, open thy heart to faith, open thy lips to consent, open thy bosom to thy Creator. Behold the Desired of all nations is standing outside and knocking at thy door. Oh, if He should pass on whilst thou delayest to open, and thou shouldst have to begin once more to seek with sorrow "Him Whom thy soul loveth"! Arise, therefore, and make haste to open to Him. Arise by faith, make haste by devotion, open by consent.

"And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." Divine grace is always found in intimate union with the virtue of humility, because "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." The Virgin therefore replies with humility, in order that the seat of grace may be prepared in her. "Behold," she says, "the handmaid of the Lord." Oh, how sublime is the humility here manifested, which knows not how to yield to honour or to be elated with glory! She is chosen to be the Mother of God, and she calls herself His handmaid! Assuredly it is a sign of a more than common humility not to forget humility in the presence

of such glory. To be humble in abjection is nothing very great; but it is great virtue indeed, and as rare as great, to be humble in the midst of honours. For instance, were the Church, deceived by my hypocrisy, to advance such a miserable wretch as I to some post of honour, even though not very exalted, God permitting this either on account of my own sins or because of the sins of those under me: should I not immediately forget what I really am and begin to suppose myself such as I am reputed by men, who cannot see the heart? Undoubtedly: I should give credit to public opinion, and turn a deaf ear to the voice of conscience. And estimating virtue by honour, not honour by virtue, I should account myself the more holy in proportion as I should find myself elevated above others. You may see very many now in the Church, who, after being raised from a mean condition to honourable rank, and from penury to affluence, have become suddenly inflated with pride and forgetful of their former abjection, so much so indeed that they are ashamed of their kindred, yea, even disdain to acknowledge their humble parents. You may also see some wealthy persons aspiring to all kinds of ecclesiastical honours; and then, having changed their dress without changing their morals, they congratulate themselves on their sanctity. They deem themselves worthy of the positions which they have obtained by intrigue, and attribute to merit the honours which (if I may venture to affirm it) they have purchased for money. However, I will say nothing more about such as these, who are blinded by ambition, and to whom honourable positions furnish occasions for pride.

But there are others to be seen, who (I grieve to say it), after despising the glory of earthly pomp, appear to have learned pride in the very school of humility, and in the cloister itself, under the wings of the meekest and humblest of masters, to have become more arrogant and impatient than ever they were in the world. And what carries perversity further still, many are unable to put up with the least contempt in religion, who, whilst living in the world, could make themselves appear nothing better than contemptible. Their motive for entering the cloister would seem to be this, that since there was no chance of honours for them where honours were sought for by others, *there* at least they might hope for some honours where such things were avoided by all but themselves. Yet others I see—and the sight is an afflicting one—who, after entering the army of Christ, entangle themselves again in worldly affairs, again give themselves up to earthly solicitudes. You may behold them displaying much zeal in the building of houses, whilst they neglect the care of their conscience. Under the pretext of the common good, they sell their words to the wealthy and their greetings to matrons; aye, and contrary to the edict of their Divine Emperor, they covet the goods of others, and contentiously strive to recover their own, not attending to the Apostle, who announces in the name of his Sovereign; "Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another. Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Is it thus *they* have crucified the world to themselves and themselves to the world, who, whereas they were once scarcely known in their own hamlet or village, now passing from province to

province and from court to court, are reckoned amongst the acquaintance of kings and the familiars of princes? What shall I say of the religious habit itself, which they no longer esteem for its worth even as a comfortable covering, but only for its value as a graceful ornament? And they pay more attention to the material habit which clothes their bodies than to the moral habits of their minds. It is a shocking thing to say: the vain woman is now outdone in her own special art by the religious who looks more to costliness in matters of dress than to use or necessity. Even the outward form of religion is discarded by these soldiers of Christ, who value its livery not as a protection for their souls but as a becoming decoration for their bodies,—who, when they ought to prepare themselves for battle and to advance against the "powers of the air" beneath the banner of poverty (which the adversary so greatly fears) prefer in their soft garments to exhibit the sign of peace, and thus voluntarily, and without striking a blow, place themselves helpless in the hands of their enemies. The cause of such dreadful evils is to be found in the fact that the humility through which we abandoned the world has itself been abandoned by us, with the consequence that we are compelled once more to pursue the vain objects of worldly ambition, becoming as dogs that go back to the vomit.

Let us, therefore,—I mean all who recognise themselves as belonging to this class—let us listen, I say, to the answer of her who, even when she was chosen to be the Mother of God, did not lose sight of humility. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she replied, "be it done to me according to thy word." The words

" be it done to me " are an expression not of doubt but of desire. Hence, when she says, " be it done to me according to thy word," we must understand her as giving utterance to an ardent wish, and not as requiring proof after the manner of the incredulous. Nevertheless, it is also possible to regard these words as a prayer, since no one ever prays for anything unless because he has faith and hopes to receive it. And God wills that we should pray to Him even for what He has promised. Perhaps the reason why He first promises what He designs to bestow is in order that the promise may excite our devotion, and that thus what should otherwise be given gratuitously, may now be rendered as the reward of devout supplication. So does our loving Lord, Who desires that all men should be saved, endeavour to extort merits for us from ourselves ; and He prevents us by bestowing upon us gratuitously what He may reward, because otherwise the reward itself should be given gratuitously. The prudent Virgin was not ignorant of this when to the prevenient grace of gratuitous promise she joined the merit of fervent petition, praying, " Be it done to me according to thy word." As if she should say, " Concerning the Word of the Father be it done to me according to thy word. According to thy word, let the Word Who was in the beginning with God be made flesh of my flesh. Let the Word, I pray, become to me not as a spoken word which passes away, but a Word conceived and abiding ; a Word enclosed in a body of flesh, not a word expressed by the sound of the voice. Let Him become to me not an audible word which sounds in the ear, but a visible Word that my eyes may see Him, a tangible Word that

my hands may hold Him, a portable Word that I may carry Him in my arms. And let Him not become for me a written and silent word, but a Word incarnate and living: that is to say, not a word inscribed in dumb characters upon dead parchment, but the Word of God in human form impressed upon the living page of my chaste bosom, impressed, I say, not by the agency of mortal hand, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Let Him become to me what He has become to none before and shall become to none after me. God 'at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets,' and the Word of the Lord is said to have come to the mouth of some, to the ear of some others, and even to the hand of other some: but my prayer is that, according to thy word, He would vouchsafe to come into my womb. I do not ask that He should be orally proclaimed to me, or that He should be symbolically represented, but that He be silently infused, personally incarnated, corporally enclosed. Therefore let the Word of God, Who in Himself has neither the need nor the power to be made, let Him, I pray, condescend to be made flesh in me and for me, according to thy word. According to thy word, let Him be made flesh for the whole world, but in a more particular manner for me." *

* The Saint is here taking the words "fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" to mean; Let him (the Word) be made (flesh) for me according to thy word. It is the teaching of holy and enlightened men that the Incarnation was more for Mary's sake than for all the world beside.—(Translator).

St. Bernard's Apology for presuming to comment upon a passage of Sacred Scripture already expounded by other Authors.

I have explained this passage of Holy Scripture as well as I could. I know that my remarks will not obtain universal approval; on the contrary, I feel that I have made myself a butt for the censure of many. Some will regard my attempt as superfluous, others will condemn it as presumptuous: they will be displeased with the modern author who has ventured to compose a new commentary on a text which the fathers have exhaustively treated. Nevertheless, it appears to me that if some one coming after the fathers has something to say which is not opposed to the fathers, neither the fathers nor anybody else has a right to complain. But with respect to what I have borrowed from the fathers, if whilst thus escaping the reproach of presumption, I do not lose at the same time the fruit of devotion, I shall patiently endure to be considered superfluous. However, let me tell those who find fault with me for undertaking what they judge to be a needless and useless work, that it has not been my purpose to expound the Gospel, but rather to take occasion from the words of the Gospel to discourse on themes which it is a delight for me to dwell upon. And if I have done wrong in composing these homilies for the purpose of exciting my own devotion, rather than for the sake of the common good, the loving-kind Virgin, to whom this little work is most affectionately dedicated, has influence enough with her merciful Son to obtain for me the pardon of this sin also.

SERMONS ON PSALM XC.

ST. BERNARD'S PREFACE.

DEAREST brethren, when I think of your labours and sufferings, my heart overflows with compassion. I look about for something to console you, and earthly comforts suggest themselves. But then I reflect that these, instead of helping, would do you incalculable harm. For even a small subtraction from the seed means no small diminution of the harvest; and the cruel kindness that would now relax your penitential labours would likewise, little by little, rob your crown of its gems. What, therefore, shall I do? where shall I find the meal of the Prophet? * For without this seasoning, "death is in the pot." You are slain, dearest brethren, all the day long, "in labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often . . . besides those things which are" within, namely, grief of heart and a throng of temptations. You are slain indeed, my brethren, but it is for the sake of Him Who was slain for you. And if the "sufferings of Christ abound" in you, "so also by Christ (shall your) comfort abound," and your hearts, which refuse all other consolation, shall "delight in the Lord." For even the very sufferings we endure for Him become through His love

* Cf. 4 Kings iv. 38-41.

a source of consolation. Is it not certain that the burden of your tribulations is beyond what is customary for monks, beyond the power of nature, beyond human strength? It is carried, therefore, not by you but by Another, by Him, doubtless, Who, according to the Apostle, "upholdeth all things by the Word of His power." And is not the enemy thus slain with his own sword, when the very weight of sorrow wherewith he is wont to tempt us, is made the means of conquering his temptations, by giving us infallible assurance of the presence of God? For what have we to fear whilst He is with us Who "upholdeth all things"? "The Lord is the Protector of my life," sings the Psalmist, "of whom shall I be afraid? For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." What is it that sustains the whole mass of this ponderous earth? On what does the entire universe rest for support? And if there be some one body which serves as a foundation for all the others, by what is that supported? By nothing else, assuredly, than the Word of power Who upholdeth all things. For "by the Word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth."

Wherefore, in order that you may have consolation in the words of the Lord, during these days especially, when your labours and privations (as is only right) are somewhat greater than usual, it will not be amiss to expound

for you some part of Holy Scripture. Indeed, I have been requested to do this by more than one of yourselves. And it seems to me that I ought to select that particular psalm which Satan made use of to tempt the Lord, so that the very words which the malignant one attempted to turn to his advantage may become the means of destroying his power. Here I would remind you that *he* is manifestly an imitator of the enemy of souls, whosoever makes an unholy use of any part of Sacred Scripture, whosoever would " detain the truth of God in injustice," as some are frequently found to do. Beware of this, my dearest brethren, beware of this, I say, because it is the work of the devil, and all who participate in it prove themselves thereby to belong to him, wresting to their ruin what was written for their salvation. But I will not dwell any longer on this subject: it is enough, I think, to have touched upon it briefly. Let me now, with the help of the Lord, attempt a discussion and exposition of the psalm I have chosen.

FIRST SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the three Classes of Men who dwell outside the Aid of the Most High.

" He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven." *

You will most easily understand, my brethren, who he is " that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High," if I describe for you the different classes of persons who do *not* make their home in the divine help. There are three such classes, namely, those who have no hope, those whose hope is weak, and those whose hope is vain. For he does not dwell in the aid of the Most High who " hath not made God his Helper, but trusteth in the abundance of his riches " and in his own strength. Such a one is deaf to the voice of the Prophet, who calls out to him, saying, " Seek ye the Lord while He may be found ; call upon Him while He is near." For, pursuing temporal goods alone, he is " emulous of evildoers," and " envieth them that work iniquity," " seeing the prosperity of sinners " ; and thus he removes himself far from the help of the Most High, which he does not consider necessary for the attainment of such objects. I am not without fear, brethren, lest even amongst ourselves there should be some, who, instead of dwelling in the help of the Most High, " trust in their own strength and glory in the multitude of their riches." There may be someone, for instance, who, buoyed up with

* The Douay Version has " the God of Jacob," for which there seems to be no authority.—(Translator.)

fervour of spirit, feels nothing but delight in his watchings, in his fastings, in his labours, and in the other austere observances imposed by our Rule : or perhaps he seems to himself to have acquired an immense treasure of merits during a long course of years. Well, relying on this, he loses little by little, the fear of God ; then, influenced by a feeling of false and pernicious security, he begins to indulge himself more easily in curiosity and sloth, and commits faults of murmuring, detraction, and rash judgment. Now it is certain that, if he dwelt " in the aid of the Most High," he would look to himself better, and would fear to offend One Whose help he realised to be still so necessary to him. And his fear of the Lord and his anxiety to please Him would be all the greater in proportion to the gifts he has already received. For without God's assistance, we are not able even to preserve and guard what He bestows upon us. Nevertheless—though I cannot speak of or witness it without sorrow—there are some here who, in the beginning of their conversion, were fearful and careful enough, until they had made some little progress in the way of perfection and were given the taste of spiritual joy ; then, when their desires ought rather to have been intensified, according to what is written, " They that eat Me shall yet hunger," they began to say, at least, by their conduct, " Why should we serve the Lord any longer, since we already possess all that He has promised to give us ? " O my brother, if thou only knewest how little comparatively that is which thou hast obtained, and how easily it will be lost, unless He Who gave it helps thee to keep it ! These are considerations which should render us all very careful and very obedient to God, so that we shall

not belong to the number of those who therefore dwell not "in the aid of the Most High," because they regard His aid as unnecessary to them. And it is of such I have said that they are without hope in the Lord.

The second class is of those whose hope is weak, of those, namely, who considering their own powerlessness, entirely lose heart and succumb to "pusillaniminity of spirit." They dwell not "in the aid of the Most High," but in the helplessness of their own flesh, and are so fond of contemplating their own miseries, that they are ready at any moment to recite the full list of what they have to endure. For we acquire a facility for doing the things in which we are constantly engaged. Such as these, I say, do not "dwell in the aid of the Most High"; they do not so much as know that aid, because they are unable to raise their thoughts high enough to think of it, even occasionally. In the third class are they who hope indeed, but in vain. For they trust themselves so securely to the mercy of the Lord that they take no pains to get rid of their sins. Hope of this kind is utterly useless. It is a hope which confoundeth, because it is devoid of charity. And to such as entertain it the Prophet says, "Cursed is he that sinneth in hope." * The Psalmist, on the other hand, tells us that "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in them that hope in His name." Observe how significantly he speaks of the *fear* of the Lord in them that please Him, before referring to their

* This text is found neither in the Latin nor in the Greek. Mabillon refers it to Jerem. xvii. 5. But what we read there is something entirely different, "Maledictus vir qui confidit in homine" (Cursed be the man that trusteth in man).—(Translator.)

hope. For he hopes in vain who by his presumption drives far from him the grace of God and empties his hope of all merit.

Therefore no man belonging to any of these three categories "dwelleth in the aid of the Most High." The first class dwell in their own merits, the second in their miseries, the third in their sins. The dwelling-place of the third is unclean; that of the second, uncomfortable; that of the first, unsafe and stupid. For can anything be more stupid than to dwell in a house scarcely yet begun? Perhaps it appears to you to be finished? But according to Holy Scripture, "When a man hath completed then shall he begin." For this dwelling of man's merits is at best but a tottering building, which, instead of occupying, we must rather prop up and sustain. Is not this present life fragile and uncertain? Therefore similarly uncertain and fragile must be all that is founded upon it. Who indeed would have faith in the stability of a house built upon a shifting foundation? Dangerous, my brethren, is the dwelling of those who confide in their own merits, dangerous, I say, as wanting solidity. Uncomfortable I have called the home of them that are plunged in despair by the consideration of their own miseries, because, as I have said, they dwell in torments. For not only are they overwhelmed with present woes, which refuse them a moment's respite, but they suffer also and more cruelly from the foresight of troubles not yet experienced, and even from the dread of others which perhaps they shall never feel, so that in their case not "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Can any torture be more terrible, any hell be more insupportable than such a condition? And what renders their wretchedness more

wretched still is the fact that, although burdened with such a weight of miseries, they have no heavenly bread to support them. These are they who dwell not " in the aid of the Most High," because they have abandoned hope. The first class do not seek the help of God because they do not realise its necessity. And the third class are far removed from it, because they seek it in a way in which it cannot be found. For they alone ' dwell in the aid of the Most High," who desire to obtain it alone, who fear to lose it alone, and who meditate on it with anxious and assiduous thought. This is the piety of divine worship. Blessed indeed is the man who thus " dwelleth in the aid of the Most High," because he " shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven." Which of all the creatures under heaven can harm him whom the God of heaven wills to protect and deliver ? Now, everything with power to hurt is under heaven. Under heaven are the aerial powers, under heaven is the present wicked world, under heaven is the flesh which " lusteth against the spirit."

Rightly, therefore, is it said, " He shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven," so that all who render themselves worthy of this protection have nothing to fear from anything under heaven. And the same is true even if we suppose that the sense of this first verse depends on the second in the following manner, " He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, he (that) shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven, *he* shall say to the Lord : Thou art my Protector." According to this reading, the words " He (that) shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven," are explanatory of the preceding,

" He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High." Or rather the second clause seems to be ampliative of the first, as implying that we must seek not only help for well-doing, but also protection and deliverance from evil. But observe attentively how the Psalmist does not say, " He shall abide in the *presence* of the God of heaven," but, " He shall abide *under the protection* of the God of heaven." The holy angels exult in the presence of the Lord ; but it were enough for me if only I could abide under His protection. His presence inundates them with happiness ; my prayer is that His protection may render me secure. And He is here called the God of heaven, because, although really present everywhere, yet His presence in heaven is such that, in comparison with it, He seems to be without any presence on earth. Hence we say in the Lord's Prayer, " Our Father, Who art in heaven." Thus, the soul is in every part of the body, and nevertheless exists in the head in a more excellent and particular manner. For all the senses reside in the head, whereas the other members have but one, namely, the sense of touch, so that comparatively with her mode of presence in the head, the soul seems rather to rule than to occupy the rest of the body. In the same way, therefore, when we consider the presence of God which the blessed angels enjoy in heaven, the presence implied in the protection granted us on earth will appear hardly worthy of the name. Nevertheless, blessed is the man who merits even this protection. For it is he that " shall say to the Lord : Thou art my Protector." But I will reserve this verse for another sermon.

SECOND SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Lord's Care of His Elect.

" He shall say to the Lord : Thou art my Protector and my Refuge : my God, in Him will I trust."

" He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High," sings the Psalmist, " shall say to the Lord : Thou art my Protector and my Refuge : my God, in Him will I trust." He shall say this in thanksgiving, returning thanks to the mercy of the Lord for the twofold assistance granted him. For everyone who as yet dwelleth not in the kingdom, but " in the aid of the Most High," has often need to take flight and sometimes falls. It is necessary for us, I say, so long as we abide in this body, to flee from the face of pursuing temptation. And it happens occasionally, when our flight is not swift enough, that we are " pushed " and " overturned," as the Psalmist says ; " but the Lord supporteth us." He is, therefore, our Refuge, to Whom we may run from the demon when he comes to pelt the sluggards with filth,* and so we shall escape that deep dishonour. He is also our Protector, so that, even when we fall, the same Prophet assures us that we " shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His Hand under " us. Whenever, therefore, we feel in our minds the violent impulse of temptation, let us immediately have recourse to Him, and beg His assistance. But if sometimes the enemy surprises us (as happens not

* Cf. Ecclesiasticus xxii. 1-2.

seldom, because we do not run to the Lord for protection as quickly as we should), then, my brethren, we ought to beseech Him earnestly to support us with His Hand. It is a necessity * for men to fall occasionally, so long as they live here below; but whilst some are "bruised" by their fall, others are not, "for the Lord putteth His Hand under them." But how shall we be able to distinguish these, and to "separate the sheep from the goats," the just from the wicked, as the Lord shall do at the judgment? "For (even) a just man shall fall seven times, as it is written."

However, there is this important difference between the fall of the just man and the fall of the wicked, that the former is supported by the Hand of the Lord and consequently rises again stronger than ever; whereas the latter when he is fallen "shall rise again no more," because he falls either into pernicious shame or into utter shamelessness. For either he will endeavour to justify what he has done, and this is the "shame that bringeth sin," or he will harden his forehead, so that he now, like the judge in the Gospel, "feareth not God nor regardeth man," but "proclaims abroad his sin as Sodom." But when the just man falls, he falls upon the Hand of the Lord, and in such

* That is to say, a moral necessity, due to the corruption of our nature. It is in the same sense Our Lord says (Matth. xviii, 7), "It must needs be that scandals come." Such necessity does not, of course, exclude responsibility. The Saint, as is evident, is not speaking of mortal sin, at least not exclusively, since the falls in question do not prevent a man from being just. Hence his doctrine here is identical with the teaching of the Council of Trent, according to which no man can "during his whole life avoid all sins, even those that are venial, except by a special privilege from God, as the Church holds with regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary" (Can. xxiii. *de Justificat*).—(Translator.)

a manner that, wonderful to say, his very fault co-operates unto justice for him. For "we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good." And surely our sins "work together unto good" for us when they render us more circumspect and humble.* Is not he who falls upon humility supported in his fall by the Hand of the Lord? "Being pushed," says the Psalmist, "I was overturned that I might fall; but (the enemy who pushed me gained no advantage, because) the Lord supported me." Therefore the faithful soul "shall say to the Lord: Thou art my Protector." Every creature can say to Him, "Thou art my Creator." The beast of the field can say to Him, "Thou art my Shepherd." There is no human being that may not say to Him, "Thou art my Redeemer." But to say to the Lord, "Thou art my Protector," belongs to him alone who "dwelleth in the aid of the Most High." Hence he addresses the Lord as "*my* God." Wherefore does he not rather say "*our* God"? The reason is, my brethren, because although the Lord is the God of all men with regard to creation, redemption, and the other universal benefits; nevertheless each of the predestinate possesses Him in his temptations as if Something proper to himself. For He is so ready to support every one of His elect who happens to fall, and to deliver him when he runs for protection, that He seems to be

* St. Augustine (De Corrept. et Gratia, I.) has the same consoling doctrine, and perhaps it is to this Tennyson is alluding where he says so beautifully (*In Memoriam*, i.):—

> "I held it truth with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.'
>
> —(Translator)

concerned for him alone and to have abandoned the care of His other creatures.*

Consequently, it is expedient for every man to be always attentive to God, not only as to his Helper in necessity, but also as to the Witness of his conduct. For how can negligence take hold of him who never forgets that the eyes of the Lord are upon him? Or how can he help regarding God as peculiarly his own, when he beholds Him so watchful of himself that He never ceases, even for a moment, to consider both his interior and his exterior, and to scrutinise and examine as well the most secret movements of his soul as his external actions? Such a one, clearly, can say with confidence, "My God, in Him will I trust." And observe that the Psalmist does not speak in the past tense, "I trusted," nor yet in the present, "I trust," but in the future, "I will trust." As if he should say, "This is my desire, this is my resolve, this the intention of my heart, 'This, my hope, is laid up in my bosom,' and in it I will persevere. 'In Him will I trust.' I will not lose heart;

* "Jesus is the most loving of lovable friends—there never was a friend like Him before, there never can be one equal to Him, because there is only one Jesus in the whole wide world and the vast expanse of heaven, and that sweet and loving Friend, that true Lover of the holiest and purest love is *my* Jesus, mine alone and all mine. Every fibre of His Divine Nature is thrilling with love for me, every beat of His gentle Heart is a throb of intense affection for me, His sacred arms are around me, He draws me to His breast, He bends down with infinite tenderness over me, His child, for He knows I am all His, and He is all mine. In His eyes the vast world, the myriads of other souls have all vanished, He has forgotten them all—for this brief moment they do not exist—for even the infinite love of God is not enough to pour out on the soul who is clinging so lovingly to Him." (Father William Doyle, S.J., *Life* by Professor O'Rahilly, pp. 103, 104). Dr. Phelan, Bishop of Sale, has made a very interesting comparison between St. Bernard's spirituality and that of Father Doyle; cf. *Austral Light*, August, 1920.—(Translator.)

neither will I hope in vain, because 'cursed is he that sinneth in hope,' and he likewise that sinneth in despair. But I am also unwilling to belong to the number of those who have no hope in the Lord. For 'in Him will I trust.'" Let us hear now what is the fruit, what is the reward, what the advantage of this trust in the Lord. "He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters and from the sharp word." But with your permission I will keep this "snare" and this "sharp word" for to-morrow's sermon.

THIRD SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Spiritual Snares and Hunters, and on the necessity of Penance and Fear.

"*My God, in Him will I trust. For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters, and from the sharp word.*"

These words, my brethren, fill me with compassion for myself and with sorrow for the miseries of my soul. Listen: "He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters." Are we therefore only beasts of the field? Beasts, and no more! For "man, when he was in honour, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them." Men, consequently, are beasts, wandering sheep, that have no shepherd. O man, wherefore art thou proud? Why dost thou boast of thy little knowledge? Behold, thou art become as a wild beast, so that even the hunters set their snares to catch thee. But who are these hunters? They are hunters of the greatest malice, wickedness, craft, and cruelty. They are hunters who sound no horn, so that they may not be heard, but "shoot in secret the undefiled." They are "the rulers of the world of this darkness," most cunning in evil and in devilish guile, so that, in comparison with them, the most astute amongst mortals is only as a beast before the sportsmen. I except, of course, such men as can say, like the Apostle, "We are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices." For to these it is given in the wisdom of God to discover the deceits of the malignant one. I beseech you, therefore,

ye "new plants" of the Lord, ye whose minds are not as yet sufficiently disciplined to discriminate between good and evil, do not follow the counsels of your own heart, do not "abound in your own sense," lest, being still inexperienced, you be ensnared by the crafty hunters. The devil openly spreads his net for the wild beasts of the forest, that is to say, for the men of this world, because he has no doubt that they will allow themselves to be easily caught. But you, my brethren, are like the prudent stags which slay the reptiles and long after the living fountain. For you, therefore, the hunters lay more cunning snares, and devise more crafty means of deception. I beg of you, then, to "be humbled under the mighty Hand of God," your Shepherd, and to follow the advice of those who are acquainted with Satan's wiles, taught by the study of many years, and by the constant experience of themselves and others.

I have now explained to you who these hunters are, and what the beasts. The next question for discussion is the meaning of the snare. I will not excogitate any theory of my own, nor will I offer you any doubtful interpretation. The Apostle himself shall inform us what that snare means, for he is well acquainted with the hunters' crafty designs. Tell us, then, O blessed Paul, what is the infernal snare which the faithful soul rejoices to have escaped? "They that will become rich," he answers, "fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil." Consequently, my brethren, the wealth of this world is a snare of Satan. Alas! how few do we find to congratulate themselves on escaping this snare! How many rather lament that they have not been caught in it as fully as they desire, and still

do all in their power to entangle themselves in its meshes more and more! But you that have left all things and have followed Him Who had not where to lay his Head, the Son of man, rejoice and say, "For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters." Confess to Him with your whole heart, with your whole mind, and with all your strength; render Him thanks with all the power and sincerity of your souls, saying each for himself, "For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters." And that you may understand how great a benefit this is, that you "may know the things that are given you from God," attend to what follows: "And from the sharp word." O man, or rather beast, hast thou no fear of the snare? Well, at least be afraid of the bludgeon. "From the sharp word." What is this "sharp word," my brethren, but the cries that resound through the place of everlasting woe, as the shouts of the hunters when the quarry is taken: "Hither with him, hither with him; strike him; tear him; kill him at once; take away the spoil quickly"? What, I ask, is this "sharp word" if it be not that which we read in the Prophet, "Take away the impious that he may not see the glory of God?" * Oh, how the hunters will exult when they have run down the poor beast! How joyously they will cry, "Slay him, slay him; pierce him with the spits; place him over the fire; put him into the boiling pot." That also was a "sharp word" which

* The Saint is here following the Septuagint version which has: *ἀρθήτω ὁ ἀσεβὴς ἵνα μὴ ἴδῃ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου.* The Vulgate reading is very different: "In terra sanctorum iniqua gessit, et non videbit gloriam Domini" (In the land of the saints he hath done wicked things and he shall not see the glory of the Lord).—Is. xxvi. 10.

the "provoking house," the Jewish people, uttered of old, "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him, crucify Him." Oh, how sharp it was, how cruel, how horrible! Verily, their "teeth were weapons and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." This "sharp word" Thou didst endure, Lord Jesus. And wherefore, unless in order to deliver us from that other "sharp word"? Grant us now in Thy mercy that we may not have to hear that to save us from which Thou hast vouchsafed to suffer so much.

When we try to persuade worldlings to do penance they are wont to answer us, "This saying is hard and who can hear it?" This is what we read in the Gospel. The Lord was discoursing on penance, but figuratively, because He was speaking to men to whom it was not "given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." When, therefore, they heard Him declaring, "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you," they uttered these words, "This saying is hard and who can hear it?" And many of them "went back and walked no more with Him." But why should we not understand the expressions, "eat My Flesh" and "drink My Blood," as an injunction to participate in His sufferings and imitate the example which He has given us in the flesh? * The same lesson

* St. Bernard, following the example of many other Fathers, is here giving a *secondary* and *symbolic* meaning to words which refer primarily and directly to the Holy Eucharist. According to A Lapide (*Comment. in Joan.* vi. 52) he is only developing an idea suggested by St. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, l. iii., c. xvi., where the illustrious Bishop says that the command to eat Christ's Flesh and to drink His Blood is a command to communicate in His Passion. But elsewhere both the Doctor of Grace and the Doctor of Love understand these words of the Eucharist. In the short Treatise, *De Corpore Domini*,

is taught us in the most holy Sacrament of the altar, wherein we receive the Lord's Body; that, as in this mystery, the species of bread visibly enters our bodies, so we may know that, by the example of His earthly life, the Lord Himself comes into us invisibly to "dwell by faith in our hearts." For when justice enters our souls, He also enters "Who of God is made unto us justice," as St. Paul speaks. And according to St. John, "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in Him." Nevertheless, many still repeat to us, "This saying is hard." Hard, then, do they consider "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation," and "which worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory"? Is it hard to redeem with a very light and short-lived labour those pains and torments which shall endure for ever, which no created mind is capable of conceiving? Do the words, "Do penance," seem a "hard saying" to you? If so, you labour under an illusion.

St. Bernard combines the two interpretations thus: "Nisi manducaveritis Carnem Filii hominis et biberitis Ejus Sanguinem non habebitis vitam in vobis (Joan. vi. 54). Vis ergo manducare Carnem Filii hominis ut habeas vitam aeternam? Ut dignus sis, recollige ea quae pro te passus est, assidua recordatione memoriae tuae commenda passiones Animae, et Corporis necessitates, revolve per singula omnia usque ad mortem crucis, et sic exhibe suo exemplo et imitatione, corpus et animam tuam 'hostiam viventem, sanctam, sibi placentem,' ut te totum exhibeas Ei sacrificium acceptabile in odorem suavitatis, sicut Ipse se totum in tua redemptione expendit. Ultimo vero crede firmiter, absque, omni mentis scrupulo sanctum Panem et sanctum Vinum super altare secundum formam sanctae Ecclesiae verum suum effici Corpus et Sanguinem in manu sacerdotis." Indeed, since the literal interpretation has been adopted by three General Councils (the Council of Ephesus, the second Council of Nice, and the Council of Trent, s. xiii., c. ii.) it is not lawful for Catholics to put it aside. Cf. A Lapide, loc. cit.; also Wiseman's *Lectures on the Blessed Eucharist*, i. and ii.—(Translator.)

And some day you may hear what is in truth a "hard saying," yea, a "sharp word," and an "evil hearing": "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." I say to you, therefore: fear this "sharp word"; esteem this a "hard saying." So shall you find out for yourselves that the yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light. For even if that yoke should not in itself appear sweet to you as yet, you certainly must esteem it very sweet in comparison with the bitterness of final reprobation.

But as for you, my brethren, you are those "winged ones" before whose eyes, as the Psalmist sings, "the net is spread in vain." You that have renounced altogether the riches of this world, being thus delivered from the "snare," what have you to fear from the "sharp word"? You are that happy Iduthun,* to whom several of the psalms are inscribed, because you have passed through the "snare," and from the "sharp word" are fled afar. For to whom will Christ address the words, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat"—to whom, I ask, are these words to be addressed except to those who shall have abounded with the goods of this world? Do not your hearts leap with joy at what I am now saying to you, and are not your souls filled with sweetness? Does your poverty not appear more precious in your eyes than all the treasures of earth? For your poverty it is that delivers you from the "sharp word." How indeed can God require from us

* Psalms xxxviii, lxi, and lxxvi, are "inscribed to Iduthun for victory." This Iduthun was one of David's chief singers. —(Translator.)

what we have voluntarily renounced for the love of Him? And nevertheless you do also really accomplish what is only an obligation for the rich, since by the labour of your hands you feed and clothe Jesus Christ in His poor, so that nothing may be wanting to you.* Give thanks, therefore, to God, and say, "For He hath delivered Me from the snare of the hunters and from the sharp word." Rejoice, I say, but as yet let your joy be tempered with fear. I would have you to be always joyous, but—in this life—never secure, always rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, yet always fearful too, and guarding yourselves against a relapse.

Is there, then, something which you ought be to afraid of still? Yes, my brethren, there is yet one cause of fear for you, and that the gravest of all. It is the sin of Judas, the sin of apostasy. You have done well in taking wing like the dove and flying away to be at rest. For there is no rest in the world, nothing but labour, and sorrow, and affliction of spirit. What, therefore, can be a source of fear to the soul that has taken flight, except that possibly she may perceive on

* As regards the care for the poor which distinguished the medieval monasteries, it is worth while quoting the following testimony from a Protestant historian, Rev. P. Newcome: "Their utility appeared in these respects, that they exercised great hospitality towards the poor; and this was done at one-tenth of the expense which the poor now create, by being maintained by a legal provision: the monasteries were in general the houses of reception for all the sick, who were here nursed and cured; they generally employed masters to teach the poor children of the neighbourhood. . . . In spite of all the calumny that was thrown out against them, nothing so well proclaims their utility as this: that they maintained themselves in repute, some of them one thousand years, and many for the space of five, four, and three hundred years; and that when they were dissolved (in England), Edward VI. and his counsellors found it necessary to endow new hospitals, build new schools, and provide new relief for the poor and helpless."—*History of St. Alban's*, p. viii. (Preface).

the earth below her a carcass or something similar, and drawn down by the desire of it, may be seen by those most cruel hunters and caught in the snares they have set for her? Then shall her last state be worse than her first. This, I repeat, is greatly to be feared, lest any of us, either in heart alone, or both in heart and in body, should return to the vomit. For we read of the children of Israel that they returned in their hearts to Egypt. And they might have returned in body also were they not prevented by the Red Sea, whose waters had come together again after their crossing. Yes, my brethren, this is what every one of us ought to fear most of all, lest perhaps we should ever go so far in offending God that we shall be manifestly rejected by Him and vomited out of His Mouth: or if shame, like the Red Sea, prohibits a visible apostasy, lest tepidity, little by little, should bring about in us an apostasy of the heart; so that under the habit of religion we should conceal the hearts of worldlings, and greedily embrace whatever of earthly consolation we may be able to discover in the cloister. For we are not holier than was the Apostle, who yet was afraid lest, when he had preached to others, he should himself become a cast away. And this fear must remain with us until "the snare is broken and we are delivered," when the soul lays aside this mortal body. For the body is itself a snare. Hence we read in the Prophet Jeremias, "My eye hath wasted my soul." Consequently, no man has a right to feel secure so long as he carries this snare about with him; but it is safer for us all to "dwell in the aid of the Most High" by Whose power alone this snare can be avoided.

FOURTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On what is meant by the Shoulders of God, and on the Four Benefits we receive under Them.

"He will overshadow thee with His shoulders: and under His wings thou shalt trust."

To the soul that humbly confesses and devoutly returns thanks for favours received, greater benefits are deservedly promised. For does not the Lord say that he who "hath been faithful over a few things" shall be placed "over many things"? On the contrary, *he* is unworthy of obtaining anything more who proves himself ungrateful for what he has already received. Therefore, to the thankful acknowledgment contained in the preceding verse, the Spirit now replies: "Not only hath thy God delivered thee from the snare of the hunters and from the sharp word, but He will even overshadow thee with His shoulders." It is my opinion that by the two shoulders of God we are to understand a twofold promise, namely, "the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come." For had God only promised the kingdom, and left us without the succour which we require on the way, men would have cause to complain and to say, "Great indeed is that which is offered us, but the means of reaching it have been withheld." Consequently, He Who has promised us a blissful immortality in the life to come, in His provident mercy offers us a hundred-fold even in this. Now, O man, what excuse remains to

thee? Surely now "the mouth is stopped of them that speak wicked things." What more is left the enemy wherewith to tempt thee, except the possibility that thy life on earth shall be long? But even if "thou hast still a great way to go," wherefore shouldst thou fear, since thou hast been given the bread of the strong so that thou canst not fail on the road? An angel brought food to the Prophet Elias. It was only bread and water, the vilest food used by men. And yet from this food the holy man derived so much strength that he was able to walk for forty days without experiencing either fatigue or hunger. Dost thou desire to receive such nourishing food from angelic hands? It would be passing strange if thou didst not.

But if thou feelest a hunger for this heavenly bread, delay not to solicit the angelic ministrations, not proudly, however, but with humble entreaty; and remember what is written of the Lord: how, when the devil tempted and urged Him to change stones into bread, He refused and made answer, "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," and how, after He had vanquished the temptations and put the tempter to flight, "angels came and ministered to Him." Therefore do thou also shun the consolations of the world and resist the suggestions of the demon, if thou desirest that the angels should minister to thee. Thy soul must refuse all comfort from others, if thou wouldst delight in the presence of the Lord. When thou art hungry, the devil will tell thee to run for bread: but attend rather to Christ, Who has said, "Not in bread alone doth man live." Wherefore then dost thou distract thyself with such a variety of cares (instead of being content

with what is barely necessary for the life of the body), so that now thou art solicitous as to what thou shalt eat, now as to what thou shalt drink, at one time thinking of what thou shalt put on, at another of where thou shalt sleep—why such manifold solicitude, since thou canst discover all these things in one, that is to say, in the word of God? For the word of God is manna "having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste," as well as the fragrance of every odour. It is repose also, true and perfect, pleasing and salutary, holy and sweet.

This, my brethren, is the promise of the present life. But who shall explain to us the promise of the life to come? If even "the expectation of the just is joy," and joy so great that there is nothing amongst the desirable things of this world worthy to be compared with it, what shall be the realisation? Hence the words of the Prophet Isaias, "The eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee." Such, then, are the "shoulders" of the Lord, and under these shoulders four benefits are conferred upon us. For under them we have a place of concealment; under them we are protected from the attacks of the spiritual hawks and kites, that is, from the aerial powers; under them we find a cooling shade which defends us from the scorching heat of the sun; under them lastly, we are fostered and fed. In another psalm the Royal Prophet says, "He hath hidden me in His tabernacle, in the day of evils," that is, whilst as yet the days are evil and we sojourn in a foreign land, which is given into the hands of the impious, which is not the kingdom of peace, nor has the God of peace reigning in it. For if God already

reigns in this world, why do we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come"? It is therefore necessary to conceal during our earthly life whatever of good we possess, because "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure, which a man having found hid it." This is the reason why we hide ourselves, even bodily, in these woods and cloisters. And if you desire to know how much we gain by such concealment, I give it to you as my firm belief, that there is not a single person listening to me, who would not be venerated as a saint, aye, reputed as an angel, were he to do in the world the fourth part of what he is doing here, where he obtains no better recognition than daily reproofs and reproaches for his negligence. Does this seem to you, my brethren, a slight advantage, that you are not esteemed as saints before you are saints in truth? * Are you not apprehensive lest, if you obtain here the worthless wage of human esteem, you shall have no reward in the life to come? It is necessary, therefore, that you should be concealed, not only from the eyes of others, but much more from your own. This is what the Lord recommended when He said to His disciples, "So you also, when you have done all these things that are commanded you, say: we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." For woe to us if we have not fulfilled our obligations! It is beyond doubt high virtue and great security to live holily, and nevertheless to attend more to what is yet wanting to one than to what one seems to have already acquired, and "forgetting the

* An allusion, possibly, to the sixty-first of St. Benedict's "Instruments of good works": "Not to wish to be called holy before one is really so; but to be so in reality that one may deserve the title."—(Translator.)

things that are behind" to "stretch oneself forth to those that are before." This, therefore, is the kind of concealment which is prepared for us, as I have said, under the shoulders of God. And perhaps it was a similar shelter, or overshadowing, the Holy Spirit gave to Mary in order to hide the incomprehensible mystery of the Lord's incarnation.

Concerning the divine protection also the Psalmist sings in another place, "O Lord, Lord, the Strength of my salvation: Thou hast overshadowed my head in the day of battle." For, as the mother-bird, on observing the approach of a hawk, spreads out her wings in order that her young ones may enter under them and there find a safe asylum; so does the infinite and ineffable loving-kindness of our Lord prepare itself to shelter us, expanding its bosom, as it were, and opening wide its arms. Hence, in a preceding verse, it is said, "Thou art my Protector and my Refuge." But it is not alone protection from our enemies we find under the shoulders of God: we find also a wholesome shade. The corporeal sun which shines in the heavens is very useful and very necessary. Yet unless its heat is tempered it will injure our weak heads, and its light needs to be moderated or it will hurt our delicate eyes. This is no fault of the sun's, but is due to our own fragility. It is the same with the Sun of justice. Therefore it is said, "Be not over just." Not that justice is not good in itself, but because it is necessary for us, in our present weak condition, that even our virtues should be tempered with grace, lest perhaps we should otherwise fall into the vice of indiscretion or vainglory. For how comes it that, in spite of our unceasing prayers and supplications, we cannot attain

to that abundance of devotion which we long for so eagerly? Do you think it is because God has become either niggardly or poor, either impotent or inexorable? Away with such a thought! No, my brethren, but He remembers our weakness and overshadows us with His wings. Nevertheless, we must not therefore desist from petitioning Him; because although we shall not obtain all we desire, we certainly shall receive as much as we have need of; the Lord, whilst protecting us from excessive (and therefore noxious) heat, will foster us like a mother, and communicate to us the warmth of His own Bosom. And this is the fourth benefit which I said we obtain under the shoulders of God, namely, that we are warmed and cherished there, as young birds under the wings of their mother, lest, if we wandered abroad, charity should grow cold, and thus we should suffer a spiritual death. For "the charity of God is (not) poured forth in our hearts (except) by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us." Under these wings of His, therefore, "thou shalt trust" securely, because the bestowal of present gifts is a sure pledge of future favours.

FIFTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Inevitableness of Temptation.

"His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night."

"Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation." Whose words these are you know, my brethren, and the occasion you know. For they were spoken by the Lord on the eve of His passion. But observe that although it was He Himself Who was to suffer and not His disciples, nevertheless it was not for Him He said they should pray, but for themselves. Hence His earlier words, spoken to Peter, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." But if the apostles had reason to be so much afraid during the passion of the Lord, how great ought our fear to be, my brethren, during our own passion? "Watch ye (therefore) and pray that you enter not into temptation," because you are surrounded by temptations on every side, and, as you have read in Job, "The life of man upon earth is a temptation." * Since, then, temptations occupy our life in such multitudes that life itself may be justly

* The Vulgate Version has "Militia est vita hominis super terram" (Job vii. 1). St. Bernard s reading translates the Greek: "πειρατήριον ἐστι ὁ βίος ανθρώπον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς."—(Translator.)

called a temptation, how much prayer and circumspection do we not stand in need of if we would avoid falling into them! Therefore in the Lord's Prayer we have the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." But because thou art thus encompassed with temptation, "His truth shall compass thee with a shield," so that if there are enemies on all sides, on all sides too is protection. These words, "shall compass thee," make it manifest that the shield is to be understood spiritually, because only by a spiritual shield can one be compassed. But truth compasses; for He is truthful Who makes the promise, and what He promises He fulfils. "God is faithful," says the Apostle, "Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able."

It is not without reason, my brethren, that the grace of divine protection is likened to a shield. Shields are broad and heavy on top, in order to defend the head and shoulders; but at the lower extremity they become narrow, so as to be less of an impediment, particularly as the legs are slender and not easy to wound, whilst injuries received in these parts are not usually very dangerous. According to the same principle Christ provides His soldiers with only a scanty and slender allowance of temporal goods for the defence of their inferior parts, that is to say, their bodies. For He does not wish to embarrass them with a multitude of earthly solicitudes, but that, like the apostles, "having food and wherewith to be clothed, with these (they should be) content." But for the protection of their higher selves, that is to say, their souls, He bestows on them a wealth and abundance of spiritual grace. For so we read, "Seek ye first the kingdom of

God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." The Lord said this with reference to food and clothing, concerning which He told us that we ought not to be solicitous, because our Heavenly Father, in His unspeakable charity, will provide them. And He will do so for two reasons: first, lest we should look upon Him as our enemy, and thus fall into despair, if He refused to supply our temporal wants; secondly, lest an excessive anxiety regarding the things of this world should prove an obstacle to the interests of our souls. For without a sufficiency of earthly goods both the service of God and life itself would be impossible. But the less of them we can manage with the better for ourselves.

The Psalmist therefore says, "His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day; of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noon-day devil." These four dangers, my brethren, represent four kinds of temptation by which we are surrounded. Hence we have need to be surrounded also by the shield of the Lord, so that it may protect us on the right side and on the left, in front and behind. I wish you would constantly bear this in mind, that no one can live here below without temptation, and that when one temptation happens to leave us, we may always confidently, or rather fearfully, expect another,* and that we may only so pray to be delivered from them as never to look for or promise ourselves perfect repose and security whilst we abide

* "Alas! what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting, where all things are full of snares and enemies? For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another cometh."—*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III. ch. xx.

in "this body of death."* And in these combats we must admire the merciful dispensation of the divine goodness in our regard. For the Lord often allows us to be troubled for a long time with certain temptations, in order to protect us from more dangerous ones; and from some He delivers us quickly so that we may be exercised in others which He foresees shall be more profitable to us. But we have to consider (not now, however,) what are the four temptations referred to in the passage just quoted. For it is my belief that these are the principal amongst all temptations, and that they attack those who desire to change their lives, in the order in which they are there set down.

* "Disciple: 'O Lord God, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me. . . . For notwithstanding all I can do to live in peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.' Christ: 'So it is, son; but I would not have thee seek for such a peace as to be without temptations.'"—*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III. ch. xii.

SIXTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the four Temptations which have to be encountered by every Soul aiming at Perfection.

"Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noon-day devil."

The word night, my brethren, is often used in Holy Scripture to designate adversity. And we know that, as a rule, the first obstacle which has to be surmounted by those who desire to return to God, is the difficulty of bodily mortification. For the flesh, hitherto unrestrained, does not suffer itself to be chastised and brought into subjection without a struggle ; but, being still mindful of its recently lost liberty, it violently "lusteth against the spirit," especially in those austerities in which you die daily, in which you are slain the whole day long, which are contrary to human custom, above the power of human nature, beyond human strength. What wonder, then, if such hardships and privations weigh heavy upon you, and most of all upon those who are not yet inured to them, who have not yet acquired the habit of turning promptly to prayer, of having recourse to pious meditation, in order to obtain relief from the "burden of the day and the heat" ? Very necessary to us, therefore, at the beginning of our conversion is the shield of the Lord, so that we may "not be afraid of the terror of the night." Observe that the Psalmist does not say,

"Thou shalt not be afraid of the *night*," but, "Thou shalt not be afraid of the *terror* of the night." And very properly, because the temptation is not in the affliction itself, but only in the fear of it. For we all endure the same hardships, yet not all are tempted therein. And they that are tempted, are more troubled by the fear of future sufferings than by their present tribulation.

Therefore, since fear is itself a temptation, it is rightly said to him whom the Lord encompasses with the shield of truth, that he shall not be afraid of this temptation. He may be attacked, he may be tempted, he may be afraid of the night, but this fear shall not hurt him. On the contrary, he will sing with the Psalmist, "if it shall have no dominion over me, then shall I be without spot, and I shall be cleansed." For those that are "affrighted shall purify themselves," as it is written in Job. This fear, my brethren, is a furnace; but by the power of truth it is prevented from consuming and only suffered to cleanse. Fear is indeed night and darkness, yet the sun of truth shall easily dispel it. For this sun at one time reveals to the eyes of our heart the sins we have committed, so that, as the Psalmist says of himself, we are "ready for scourges," we "declare our iniquity and take thought for our sins"; at another, it shows us the everlasting punishment we have deserved, so that all our present sufferings appear to us as so many pleasures in comparison with what we have escaped; now it exhibits to our gaze the heavenly reward towards which we are advancing, and we often recall the words of the Apostle, that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared

with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us " ; and now it brings before us all that Christ endured for our sakes, so that, pondering on the sufferings borne by the Divine Majesty, in order to redeem His worthless servants, we may feel ashamed not to suffer even a little for our own sakes.

But perhaps truth, especially truth so manifold and so encompassing, has prevailed so far as not only to resist the assaults of this fear, but even to drive it away altogether. If this be so, for thee " the night is passed." Therefore as a son of light and day " walk honestly " : but fear the flying arrow. This arrow speeds lightly and lightly penetrates ; but not light, I can assure thee, is the wound it inflicts, for it quickly slays. It is, in fact, nothing else but vainglory. Consequently, the lukewarm and the pusillanimous have no need to be afraid of it. But such as appear to be fervent and devout, they have good cause to fear this arrow, and to be always on their guard, and to be particularly careful never to lay aside the shield of truth which renders them invulnerable. For what is so contrary to vanity as truth ? I do not require thee to oppose to this arrow of vainglory any recondite and mysterious truth : only let thy soul know herself, and hold the truth which concerns herself. Unless I mistake, it will certainly be a difficult thing for any man in this life to be so deceived by the words of flatterers as to become high-minded, if he carefully examines and scrutinises his interior by the light of truth. Surely, the man who realises the wretchedness of his condition, will say to himself in the words of Wisdom, " Why is earth and ashes proud ? " Surely he who considers his own corruption shall be forced to acknowledge that

"there dwelleth not in him that which is good." But if perchance he seems to possess something of good, at any rate, he shall not be able (as I think) to find an answer to the Apostle's question, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" And elsewhere in the same Epistle we read, "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." Finally, if he sincerely examines the matter, he will understand without difficulty that he will not "be able with ten thousand to meet him that with twenty thousand cometh against him," and that "all our justices are as a filthy rag." It is this same shield of truth that must be opposed to the other temptations which follow. For the ancient enemy will not give up, even now, when thwarted in his second attempt, but will probably have recourse to more cunning devices. He has found the castle of the soul strongly defended on both sides. It were useless to continue any longer his efforts to shake it, either on the left side by pusillanimity and fear, or on the right by human applause, since such means have proved inefficacious So he says to himself: "It is plain to me now that I cannot succeed by open force; but perhaps I may be able to gain my object by craft, with the traitor to help me." Who do you think is this traitor? The traitor, my brethren, is cupidity, the root of all wickedness: the traitor is ambition, that subtle evil, that secret poison, that hidden pest, that deviser of mischief, that mother of hypocrisy, that parent of envy, that fountain of sin, that instigator of crime, that rust of the virtues, that moth of sanctity, that blindness of hearts, that vice which changes even remedies into maladies, and uses medicine to produce disease. "He has despised vainglory," says the

tempter, " because it is vain. Perhaps he will accept something more solid, perhaps he will accept honours or pleasures." Oh, how many has not this " business that walketh about in the dark " caused to be cast into the " exterior darkness " of hell, having first deprived them of their " wedding garment," and robbed their virtuous practices of all the fruits of piety! What numbers has not this pest wickedly supplanted and shamefully cast down, so that all others, who had not suspected the presence of the secret sapper, were struck with terror at their sudden fall! But what else supplies nourishment to this canker-worm except the mind's estrangement from and forgetfulness of truth? Or what else but truth can discover and unmask the traitor, and expose the " business that walketh about in the dark "? For it is truth that says to us, " What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? " And also, " The mighty shall be mightily tormented." It is truth which by its constant suggestions represents to our minds how empty is the consolation of earthly honours, how heavy the judgment that awaits them, how short is the time they will remain with us, and how uncertain their ending.

These three temptations, namely, the " terror of the night," the " arrow flying in the day," and the " business that walketh about in the dark," Satan tried against the Lord. But he did not care to attack Him with the fourth, the noon-day devil, which can be a temptation only for ignorance. For he saw that Christ possessed extraordinary wisdom, by which His answers were so regulated that in none of them was

he given the information he wanted.* In the first temptation he suggested to the Lord to provide the means of satisfying His hunger by changing stones into bread. But without telling him whether He had this power or not, the Lord spoke of another kind of bread, saying, "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." In the second temptation he urged Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, promising that if He were the Son of God He should receive no hurt, and the whole city, witnessing the miracle, would praise and magnify Him. Yet here again the Lord's answer did not inform him whether or not He was the Son of God. The third was a temptation to ambition, when the devil promised to give Him "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them if falling down" He would adore him. Do you not see, my brethren, that the way of ambition is adoration of the devil, since he promises his adorers that they shall attain to the honours and glory of this world? As for the fourth temptation, he did not presume, as I have said, to bring that against Christ, Whose wisdom he ascertained from the prudence of His answers.

But how does he act in the case of all others who appear to him to love justice and to hate iniquity? In this way: he endeavours to cover vice with the semblance of virtue. For those whom he recognises to be perfect lovers of good he will attempt to seduce

* The Saint is supposing that Satan's object in tempting Christ was to discover if He were really the Son of God and the Messias; for at the baptism in the Jordan he had heard the voice from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matth. iii. 17). Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. in Matth.* c. iv.—(Translator.)

by putting before them evil under the appearance of a perfect good, so that their very love of virtue will lead them to consent the more quickly, and they shall fall the more easily, the more rapidly they are advancing. In this temptation, therefore, Satan appears not only as a demon of the day, but even of the noon-day. Was it not through fear of this noon-day devil that Mary was "troubled" at the Angel's salutation? Does not the Apostle refer to the same where he says, "we are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices"? And in another place he tells us that "Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light." The disciples also feared this noon-day devil when, seeing Jesus walking upon the waves, they supposed it was an "apparition," and cried out in alarm. And notice how significantly the Evangelist states that it was the fourth watch of the night when the disciples began to look out for the fourth temptation. That it is truth alone which can strip falsity of its disguises, is, I think, so evident a proposition as not to need proof. Diligent consideration will easily discover these four temptations exercising the Church herself. For whilst yet in her infancy, was she not attacked by the "terror of the night," when everyone who slew the disciples of Christ thought he was rendering service to God? Then, when the persecution ceased and the morning broke, she was more grievously troubled and distressed by the "arrow that flieth in the day"; because some going forth from her, puffed up with the spirit of the flesh and desirous of vain and transient glory, sought to make a name for themselves by magnifying their own tongues and devising various and perverse doctrines. Now, however, she has peace from the pagans, she has peace

from the heretics, but she has no peace from her own false children. O Lord, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, but hast not multiplied the joy," because although "many are called, few are chosen." All are Christians, and nevertheless almost "all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Even ecclesiastical offices and dignities have been converted into sources of filthy lucre and given over to the "business that walketh about in the dark": they are no longer made the means of saving souls, but rather of procuring luxury and wealth. It is for this many have themselves tonsured, for this they frequent the churches, for this they celebrate Mass, for this they sing psalms. Nowadays we have candidates contending openly for episcopal, archdiaconal, abbatial, and other ecclesiastical offices, in order to squander the revenues of the Church on vanities and superfluities. It only remains now that "the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition," the devil,* not alone of the day, but of the noon-day, who "transformed himself into an angel of light" and even "is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped." For he shall lie in wait for the heel of mother Church with all the greater cruelty because he

* Cf. 2 Thess. ii. It is the common opinion that by Antichrist we must understand not a demon incarnate, or a moral person (such, for instance, as the Masonic Brotherhood, or the Spiritists), but an individual human being. Indeed, any other interpretation would seem to do violence to the language of St. Paul. Suarez goes so far as to declare it "most certain and of faith" that the "man of sin, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. . 3), signifies a true and singular man (*De myst. vit. Chr.*, liv. 1, 7). St. Augustine, however, mentions without blame, even with some degree of approval, the opinion of certain commentators of his time according to whom Antichrist is to be understood as signifying the whole body of Christ's opponents (*De Civ. Dei*, l. xx. c. xix.).—(Translator.)

remembers with bitterness how she has crushed his head. This, my brethren, shall be a most terrible invasion, but even from this, Christ, Who is the subsisting Truth, will deliver the Church of the elect, shortening, for their sakes, the days of tribulation (as He has promised) and destroying the noon-day devil "with the brightness of His coming." Let so much suffice on the subject of these temptations, which I remember to have treated similarly in one of my sermons on the Canticle of Canticles.* For there also we had question of the noon-day devil, suggested by the noon-day repose of the Bridegroom, the place of which the Bride besought Him to make known to her.

* It is certain from these words that the Homilies on Psalm xc. were delivered after the year 1138, for we have intrinsic evidence that Sermon XXXIII. on the Canticle (to which the Saint is here alluding) was not preached before that date.—(Translator.)

SEVENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Protection given to the Just at the hour of Death, on the Meaning of the Right and Left Hand, and on the Preference we ought to give to the Interests of the Soul.

"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh to thee."

We live in hope, my brethren, and we do not lose heart in our present tribulation, because we are looking forward to the enjoyment of everlasting bliss. And this expectation does not appear to us vain, nor this hope uncertain, for it is grounded on the promise of eternal Truth. Moreover, the gifts already bestowed upon us are a sure pledge of future favours, and the graces we have received may be regarded as a safe guarantee that we shall also infallibly attain to the happiness of the promised glory. For, as the Psalmist says, "The Lord of virtues, He is the King of glory." And in the Office of Lauds we sing,

> "The Father of glory lasting aye,
> The Father of grace invincible,
> With fervent hearts now let us pray
> To shield and guard us from all ill."*

* "Votis vocemus et Patrem,
Patrem perennis gloriae,
Patrem potentis gratiae,
Culpam releget lubricam."

Third stanza of the Ambrosian Hymn beginning "Splendor Paternae gloriae," and used for Lauds in the winter season.—(Translator.)

Also in another psalm, "For God loveth mercy and truth, the Lord will give grace and glory." Let our piety, therefore, manfully sustain the combat in this life; let it be willing to endure with patience all manner of persecution. Why indeed should it not consent to suffer everything, since, as the Apostle says, it "is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"? Yes, let our piety courageously repel the assaults of the enemy, because the Lord will be nigh to assist it in the struggle and to reward its victory with a most liberal hand. "His truth," sings the Psalmist, "shall compass thee with a shield."

And very necessary, my brethren, is the invincible protection of divine truth to the soul, not only whilst she lives in the body, but also and especially at the moment of her departure hence. For if she requires the shield of truth during life on account of the perilous combats which she has to sustain, she has still greater need of it at the hour of death against the last fearful onslaughts of the malignant spirits. Thus, when the glorious St. Martin lay dying, the hostile power endeavoured to injure his most holy soul; and the cruel beast, "knowing that he had but a short time," with all the fury of his unwearied malice, was not afraid to approach him in whom "he had not anything." Nay, he had the unspeakable impudence to draw nigh to the King of glory Himself, as we learn from the Lord's own words, "The prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not anything." Happy the soul which thus, during life, repels the darts of temptation with the shield of truth, so that, allowing no taint of poison to remain in her, "she shall not be confounded when she

shall speak to her enemies in the gate" of death! "What dost thou here, cruel beast," cried St. Martin, "thou shalt find in me nothing that is thine." Happy he who is so encompassed by the buckler of truth that it protects his "coming in" and his "going out," namely, his exit from this life and his entrance into the next, so that the enemy has no power to hurt him in front or behind! For at that awful moment (because of the horrible spectres which are wont to present themselves) he is more in need of a strong defence, of a faithful guide, and a wise consoler, than he was during life of help and protection against invisible seducers.

Therefore, my dearest brethren, "glorify and bear (Christ) in your body." You shall find Him a sweet burden, a pleasant load, a salutary weight, and that even though He may sometimes appear to press heavily upon you, even though He should occasionally plunge the spurs into your sides and use the whip on your back to conquer your stubbornness, even though He should, from time to time, "with bit and bridle bind fast your jaws" and hold you tight. This is your happiness. Make yourselves, then, as beasts of burden, to carry the Saviour, yet not altogether as beasts of burden. "Man when he was in honour," says the Royal Prophet, "did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them." Wherefore does the Psalmist here so greatly lament or reprove in man a likeness to the beasts; especially because in another place he says of himself, speaking to God, and apparently not without some self-satisfaction, "I am become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee"? It seems to me, I should rather say,

it is manifest to me, that there is a certain kind of resemblance to the beasts commendable in man, not surely that which consists in the want of wisdom and understanding, but that which consists in the imitation of their patience. The Prophet would certainly not be understood to have spoken in anger, nor yet in sorrow, had he said, "Man when he was under the yoke of God did not resist, but was as a beast before Him." Who could do otherwise than envy exceedingly that poor beast on whose humble back the Saviour (wishing thus to commend His own ineffable meekness) condescended to sit, if along with the privilege of bearing so precious a burden, it had also the power to appreciate the honour? Be ye therefore not simply beasts, but in some respects *as* beasts. Bear your burden with patience, yet understand what an honour it is to be so laden. Reflect wisely and sweetly on the priceless worth of the load you carry and on the advantage to yourselves accruing therefrom.

The illustrious martyr, St. Ignatius, who was a disciple of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who belongs to us in a special manner because his precious relics have enriched our poverty, this great man, I say, wrote many letters to one Mary * in which he addresses her as "Christ-bearing" (*Christifera*). Could there be a more splendid title of dignity or one expressive of greater honour? For if to serve Christ is to reign, to bear Him must surely be more honourable than burdensome. Do you suppose there was any occasion to fear lest that ass's colt, whereon the Saviour sat, should fall on the way beneath such a burden?

* Not the Blessed Virgin, but Maria Cassabolita, to whom the holy Martyr addressed several letters.—(Translator.)

Or with such a Rider had it any reason to dread the attacks of wolves, the ambush of robbers, the steep precipice, or other such dangers? Blessed is the man who has borne Christ in such a way as to deserve to be introduced into the holy city by the Saint of saints! There is nothing at all that he need be afraid of, neither obstacles in the road nor a repulse at the gate. For the holy angels will prepare the way for such a beast of burden, as the faithful people did of old for the ass that bore the Saviour. Hence the Psalmist sings, "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." However, these verses must await their turn: the order of exposition must follow the order of the sacred text.

"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh to thee." This, as you know, is the verse which I have to discuss to-day. In my discourse upon the last preceding text, I explained, if you remember, how the shield of truth protects us from the four principal and most dangerous temptations which we have to encounter in this life, namely, from "the terror of the night," from "the arrow that flieth in the day," from "the business that walketh about in the dark," from "invasion and the noon-day devil." But what is said here, "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh to thee," has to be referred, as I think, to the future life. And you remember, I suppose, the words cited from the Apostle at the beginning of the present discourse, in which he tells us that "piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come."

Listen, then, and listen with joy of heart, to what appears to belong to the promise of the future life, and consequently to your hope. "For where your treasure is there (should be) your heart also." I can bear witness to the attention with which you have heard what appertains to the life that now is. But still greater attention is due to that which concerns the life to come. For even the pseudo-prophet—Balaam I mean, as you understand who have read the narrative—even that impious man prayed that "his soul might die the death of the just and that his last end might be like to them." So precious are the fruits of piety, so great is the reward of justice, that even the wicked and unjust cannot help desiring them. Nevertheless, the "songs of Sion" do not sound to advantage amongst the willows of Babylon. The true Israelite must therefore hang up his harp upon them, and rather begin a lamentation "upon the rivers * of Babylon," if perchance they can be persuaded to join in his weeping. But here manifestly is the place for song, where are not wanting those who with all alacrity of spirit will dance to the sound of the psaltery, to the music of Sion, and who, in the eagerness of holy desires, are impatient to fly thither, saying with the Psalmist, "Who will give me wings like a dove and I will fly and be at rest?" For what is it to exult (*exultare*) but to leap out of one's self (*ex se ipso saltare*)? Those who are still struggling for life in the midst of the ocean, tossed upon the waves, buffeted by the billows, find but little consolation in the accounts of the serenity and the loveliness, no matter how great, of the

* The willows and rivers of Babylon are here taken to represent earthly-minded men who are easily swayed by their passions and lusts, and live for this world alone. Cf. Bellarmin on Ps. cxxxvi. 1-2.—(Translator.)

land so far distant, and which they almost despair of reaching. In the same way, the worldly soul can discover nothing to comfort her in the words which we are now examining. For no such soul has as yet merited to receive the promise, " A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." Remember to whom these words are addressed, to him, namely, " that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High," and " shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven."

Listen, therefore, you who " in thought and desire " have already reached the haven of salvation, who, having cast out the anchor of your hope, so to speak, seem to cling irremovably to that delectable land, and who, like holy Job, " all the days in which you are now in warfare, expect until your change come." I tell you confidently that the principal and surest approach to the longed-for haven is the manner of life you are living here. For a divine vocation and supernatural holiness form the necessary preparation for our entrance into glory. It may be said that these two things, viz., the call of God and our sanctification, constitute a kind of bridge, connecting one eternity with another, the eternity of predestination with the eternity of glorification. I call them eternities, because whilst predestination has been bounded by no beginning, glorification shall be confined by no ending. But lest you should suppose it is only a fancy of my own that makes our vocation and justification a bridge between two eternities, listen to the Apostle, and see if he does not express the same idea when he says, " Whom He (God) foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." How, think you, or in what order, will He glorify

His elect? For there is no work of God that has not order. Do you imagine you shall pass from predestination to glorification by a sudden bound, as it were? If not, then build for yourselves a connecting bridge, or rather avail yourselves of the one already built. "Whom He predestinated," continues the Apostle, "them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

This, my brethren "is the way which seemeth good" to many. And a good way it is in truth, with regard to the end whereof there is nothing to be feared. You have no cause to anticipate evil at its term. Advance, then, with courage, and all the more eagerly in proportion to your confidence that you are now nearing the goal. You possess the means already, how therefore can it be that you are not approaching the end? "Do penance," says the Saviour, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But some one may answer me, "Yes, but 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and (none but) the violent bear it away.' It is only through the midst of hostile phalanxes I can find access to that kingdom. There are monsters to be met with on the road: they fly in the air, they beset the paths, and everywhere lie in wait for travellers." Nevertheless, I say to thee: go forward with good courage and fear not. Thy enemies are powerful, indeed, and numerous. But what of that? "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." They shall fall round about thee, and shall never again have the power to do thee harm, yea, shall not be able to come nigh thee any more. For "the wicked one shall see and

shall be angry"; but he can only attack thee from the side, because the mercy of thy God shall go before and follow thee, as I have said, guarding thy going out and thy coming in. Otherwise how could any human soul sustain the terrific onslaught of the "spirits of wickedness," without being overwhelmed with insupportable fear?

What think you, my brethren? If it were allowed even one of the innumerable angels of Satan to rush at this moment into your midst, and to show himself in all his fiendish ferocity and in the hideous ugliness of a body of darkness, which of you would have the courage or the power so much as to gaze upon him? Not long since, as you well remember, a phantom of the night was permitted to terrify one of your number, at first in sleep and afterwards when awake, and to such a degree that almost during the whole of the next day the poor brother continued in a state of terror and could not be calmed. Yea, you were all of you badly frightened when his blood-curdling cries sounded in your ears. You ought to feel ashamed that your faith seemed then to have slept even as your bodies. This occurrence was doubtless permitted for our instruction, in order to make us more earnest by reminding us with whom "our wrestling" is, lest at any time we should be found either heedless of Satan's malice or ungrateful for the divine protection. For it was the violent pain of impotent jealousy that excited the demon's inveterate hatred of us to such a pitch of fury, whereby he showed that he is more fiercely tormented than usual during these holy days by our increased devotion and penance. It is with the same fury of jealous rage, and even with

larger liberty, that he attacks holy souls at the hour of death. But he can then only approach them from the side (as already remarked) : he is not allowed either to assault them in front, with open violence, as it were, or treacherously to creep upon them from behind.

But not even " by the wayside " shall he lay for thee a " stumbling-block," because, as it is written, " he shall not come nigh to thee." And not alone shall he not come nigh to hurt thee, but he shall not even approach so as to make thee afraid. Thou seemest to me to be apprehensive lest perchance an uncontrollable terror should seize thee at the view of such horrible spectres and so vast a multitude of ghoulish forms. But courage ! Thou shalt have at thy side a most excellent Comforter, a most admirable Consoler, the Same of Whom it is written, " Before Him the Ethiopians shall fall down, and His enemies shall lick the ground." Plainly, " in His sight the malignant is brought to nothing " ; and thus will He glorify the soul that fears Him. Only be Thou at my side, Lord Jesus, and let my enemies rush upon me as they please, for all their efforts shall be fruitless : let them hurl themselves against me from all sides, for they shall be beaten back " and perish at the presence of God as wax melteth before the fire." Why should I be afraid of enemies who are already vanquished ? Why should I fear enemies already in panic ? Why should I tremble before enemies already cast down ? No, but I will say with the Psalmist, " Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me," O Lord, my God. For as soon as the " day shall break and the shadows retire," the powers of darkness shall fall on every side. If even now,

whilst "we walk by faith and not by sight" amidst their malignant and secret suggestions, our faith conquers and triumphs over all the hosts of hell, how shall not the clear perception of manifest truth more easily vanquish them then, with all their black and horrible phantoms? But lest perhaps thou shouldst be disconcerted at their number, lest the very multitude of thy enemies should frighten thee, remember how, at the first command of the Saviour, a whole legion of devils went out from the body of a single man whom they had long possessed and occupied, and how without His permission they did not dare to enter even the swine. Much more, then, shall they fall around the departing soul which fights under His leadership, however numerous they may be. Yes, they shall fall, crying out in confusion and astonishment, "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" Fearless and undaunted, rather I should say, exulting and praising God, "thou shalt consider with thy eyes, and shalt see the reward of the wicked," never more to sustain their assaults, never more to tremble at their fury.

These remarks, as I think, would have sufficed for to-day, were it not for the strong suspicion I have that the minds of some of you are still strained in expectation. Unless I am deceived, the more reflective amongst you are asking themselves why it is that, according to the Psalmist, ten thousand are destined to fall at the right hand, and only a thousand at the left. I say "the left," because in my opinion that is what the Prophet intends we should understand when he speaks of the "side," especially as he immediately designates the right

hand by its proper name. And in truth it is not without a mysterious significance that we are told so many shall fall at the left hand, and ten times as many at the right. Nobody, I suppose, will be so dull and undiscerning as to think that the words, "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand," are meant to signify an exact proportion, and not rather a superabundant excess. At all events, that is not my way of interpreting the Holy Scriptures, nor is it the way of the Church of God. On the left hand, then, a thousand shall fall, and ten thousand shall fall on the right. And the reason why the enemies fall in greater number on the right is, because they are wont to attack this side in greater strength and with greater fury. If you will now turn your attention to the great body of the Church, you may easily observe that her spiritual members are accustomed to be more violently assaulted than such as are carnal: for it seems to me that these two classes of Christians may be regarded not unreasonably as representing the Church's right and left sides. Against this mystical body the envious malice of the proud demon wages unremitting war, attacking more fiercely the more perfect members, according to what is written, "His food is what is most excellent,"* and "He will drink up a river and not wonder: and he trusted that the Jordan may run into his mouth." He wages a relentless war, I say, against the whole Church, yet not without subserving a certain design of divine wisdom, which does not suffer even the weak "to be tempted above that which they are able, but will make also with

* "Esca ejus electa." These words are not found in the Vulgate.—(Translator.)

temptation issue that they may be able to bear it," whilst furnishing the perfect with occasions of more glorious and more numerous victories over the enemy. Consequently, the entire Church of the elect shall be crowned, because on both sides, right and left, she shall have " lawfully striven," mightily " pushing down (her) enemies with (both) horns " during her earthly career, so that a little later they (the enemies) shall manifestly appear falling, a thousand on her left hand and ten thousand on her right. Thus of old, when David had given proof of superior prowess, and Saul's reprobation was not yet known in Israel, " the women sung as they played, and they said: Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

But if you prefer to understand these words of each individual member of the Church, according to this view also, you can discover, as I think, an appropriate spiritual signification by consulting the records of your own experience. For you shall find that the " opposing powers " labour to wound us on the right side with for more earnestness and more manifold cunning than they show in their attacks upon our left: that they are more concerned to destroy our souls than to injure our bodies. We know that they envy us all kinds of good, material as well as spiritual, and that they endeavour to deprive us of both temporal and eternal happiness: nevertheless they would be much better pleased to see us losing the " dew of heaven " than the " fatness of earth." As to whether I have spoken properly in representing as the two sides of man the two substances whereof his nature consists, that, my brethren, is for you to judge. But if your verdict herein is favourable, I shall have no fear that you will

find fault with me for assigning the goods of the soul to the right hand and the goods of the body to the left ; and the more especially, because it is your constant care and solicitude never to regard your right hand as your left, or your left hand as your right. Nor does the Wise Man approve of any other disposition than that we should hold " length of days, viz., our eternal interests, in the right hand and in the left riches and glory," that is to say, the goods of time. It is very expedient for us to know this also : against what point the enemy directs his most violent and determined efforts. For we have to make the most resolute resistance there where the danger is most threatening, where the battle rages fiercest, where the issue is to be decided, where a shameful captivity awaits the vanquished and a glorious triumph the victors.

Therefore, my brethren, it cannot be imputed to you as folly that you seem to have exposed your left side to the enemy to pummel as he pleases, in order that you may thus protect your right with greater diligence. For this is the prudence of the serpent, which Christ has so earnestly commended and proposed for the imitation of all His disciples : to be ready to expose the whole body, if necessary, for the protection of the head. This is the only true philosophy ; this is the counsel of the Holy Spirit, that " with all watchfulness " we should " keep our heart, because life issueth from out of it." This, lastly, is " the grace of God and His mercy with His saints " and His " respect to His chosen," that disregarding, as it were, their left side, during the time of their probation, He is ever standing near to defend their right. Hence it is that the Psalmist

testifies of himself, "I set the Lord always in my sight: for He is at my right hand that I be not moved." And do you not suppose that the Lord likewise held the right hand, and the right hand alone, of holy Job, since He gave the enemy full power to work his will on his flesh and substance? "And the Lord said to Satan: Behold he is in thy hand"; but added, "yet save his soul." O good Jesus, would Thou wert ever at my right hand! Would that my right hand were always held by Thee! For I know and am certain that no adversity shall have power to hurt me if "no iniquity has dominion over me." Let my left side, therefore, be stripped bare and beaten whilst I live here below. Let it be made a butt for injuries and insults. Gladly do I expose it, provided Thou, O Lord, dost defend me, provided Thou art "my protection upon my right hand."*

But perhaps we ought to understand the thousand who fall on the left hand to be wicked men rather than demons. For our human enemies only persecute us on account of temporal and transitory goods, which out of jealous malignity they hate us for having, or rather, from an unjust cupidity, lament that they have not themselves. They will endeavour, perhaps, to deprive us of the substance of this world, or of the favour of men, or even of the life of the body. But beyond this the malice of men cannot go: they have no power to injure the soul. But the demons, as you know, envy us the eternal happiness of heaven; not that they have any hope of obtaining it for themselves, since, as they are aware, it is irreparably lost to them,

* Cf. St. Augustine's prayer, "Hic caede, hic ure, sed parce in aeternum."—(Translator.)

but because they cannot endure to see the "needy lifted up out of the dung hill" and enjoying the glory in which they were created* and have for ever forfeited. Consequently their obstinate malice rages against us and they are consumed with bitter jealousy at the thought that weak human nature is destined to obtain what they proved unworthy to keep. And even when they endeavour to inflict temporal loss on anyone, or rejoice to see it inflicted by other causes, their one motive is that the material injury may become an occasion of spiritual detriment either to the person himself or to some other: just as, on the contrary, whenever men attempt either to induce us to do, or to do themselves, what is prejudicial to our spiritual interests, that is not their principal object, but rather some temporal advantage which they expect shall accrue to themselves, or to us, or to somebody else: that is to say, they are mainly influenced by the desire of obtaining temporal good or avoiding temporal evil. It

* Concerning the original state of the angels, St. Augustine says similarly, "The angelic creature, from the first instant of its creation, was made a participant of the divine eternity and closely united to God, and by the sweetness of most blissful contemplation was raised above all the mutability and vicissitudes of temporal things" (*Confess.*, lib. xii. cap. 9). In another place (*De Eccles. dogm.*, cap. lix.) he writes, "The holy angels persevered in the happiness in which they were created." Nevertheless, neither St. Augustine nor St. Bernard intended to contravene the certain doctrine that the angels (just as man) were created in a state of probation. The former in his Treatise *De corrept. et Gratia*, cap. x.-xi., distinctly subscribes the orthodox teaching, and the same is implied in many passages of St. Bernard, especially in cap. viii. and ix. of the work *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*. Therefore the glory and happiness which they suppose to have belonged to the angels at the first moment of their existence, must not be understood as an effect of the Beatific Vision, but either as resulting from the hope of this, or more probably, as a natural and supernatural felicity analogous to that enjoyed by our first parents before the fall. Cf. Suarez, t. ii. 569-74.—(Translator.)

may be, however, that a man is able to change himself into a devil to such a degree as to wish to behold someone whom he heartily hates condemned to eternal torments.

Being thus in so many ways harassed and pursued by our spiritual enemies, why are we so wretchedly remiss in the care of our souls? I am ashamed to acknowledge it, but the greatness of my grief will not suffer me to be silent: how many there are at the present day, even amongst those who wear the religious habit and are bound to the pursuit of perfection, how many, I say, shall you now find who seem to have fulfilled in themselves that awful imprecation of the Prophet, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten!" For by devoting all their care and solicitude to the defence of their left side, they have acquired much wisdom, but it is the wisdom of this world, which they ought to have renounced: it is the wisdom revealed, not by the Father Who is in heaven, but by flesh and blood, to which they formerly appeared, like the Apostle, unwilling to "condescend." Hence you may see them eagerly pursuing the goods of fortune; rejoicing like seculars over worldly advantages; pusillanimously disturbed by any loss, however small, of earthly goods, and contentiously striving for the possession of the same; shamelessly running hither and thither; scandalously engaging themselves in purely temporal affairs, as if this were their sole concern, this their substance and portion. The peasant, who has no more extensive or more valuable possession than a few miserable acres, may excusably devote all his attention to the cultivation of them. The beggar may conceal in his bosom a morsel of bread, because this is the only

kind of ware that would rust in his wallet. But as for thee, my brother, wherefore dost thou spend thyself on trifles so poor, criminally prodigal of thy labour? For thou hast a richer inheritance than the things of this world. Perhaps thou thinkest that it is too far away? If so, thou errest. For nothing is nearer to us than that which is within us.* But perchance thou wilt answer, not that it is too far remote, but that it is of no value, and that therefore thou deemest it more prudent to strive after a sufficiency of earthly goods? This also is a mistake. The sufficiency thou art seeking thou shalt more surely find in the service of God, nay, nowhere else can it be found at all. Possibly thou art under the impression that the spiritual vineyard requires no labour? Or that it would not sufficiently reward thy labour? Or at least that it is perfectly safe and not needing to be watched by the keeper? If thou entertainest any such belief, know that thou art harbouring a grave delusion. In spiritual matters it is especially true that "what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap," and that "he who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap in blessings," so that one man may have fruit thirty-fold, another sixty-fold, and a third a hundred-fold. "But thou hast this treasure in earthen vessels," that is, if thou still hast it. For it seems to me thou hast lost it; it seems to me that it has been taken from thee; it seems to me that, in the words of the Prophet, "strangers have devoured thy strength and thou knowest it not"; it seems to me that the reason why thou dost not keep thy heart in thy treasure is because that treasure itself has been

* "For behold the kingdom of God is within you."—Luke xvii. 21.

lost. But if it is still in thy possession, then I beg of thee, who art so careful of thy other goods that thou despisest not the least, who showest so much solicitude for the preservation of thy chaff, I beg of thee to attend also to the keeping and guarding of thy corn. Nay, thou oughtest not to expose thy treasure to any risk at all seeing thou art so attentive to thy dunghill. For although the dunghill may excite the envy of a thousand, perhaps there will be ten thousand enemies to envy thee thy treasure, and enemies no less abounding in cruelty and craft than they are strong in numbers. "A thousand shall fall at thy side," says the Psalmist, "and ten thousand at thy right hand." Turn hither the eyes of thy faith. Perhaps thou shalt discover that the robbers have already broken through, perhaps they are now engaged in plundering thy house and dividing the spoil. Wherefore dost thou keep such vigilant guard over thy left side, like a foolishly watchful sentinel, unless because worldly goods appear to thee to be no longer at thy side but before thy face, unless because it is these things rather than the Lord thou settest always in thy sight, so that he who touches them seems to wound, not thy side, but the very apple of thine eye?

Oh, take care, whoever thou art, that thus, neglecting thy right side, attendest exclusively to thy left, take care lest at the judgment thou shouldst find thyself placed with the goats, on the left which thou hast chosen. This is a "sharp word," my brethren, and no wonder it makes you tremble. But it is not enough to fear it unless we also endeavour to avoid it. And I recall how my Lord Jesus, after all His other unspeakable mercies to me, for my sake also suffered His right Side to be opened, because He wished to give me to

drink from that Side only, and there to prepare for me a place of refuge. Would to God I were worthy to dwell like the dove of the Canticle " in the clefts of the Rock, in the hollow place " of His right Side ! But remember that Christ did not feel this wound at all. For He willed to receive it only after the slumber of death had deprived Him of sensibility. This was in order to admonish us that, so long as we live, we ought to keep wakeful watch over our right side ; and that the soul which is so perversely insensible as not to be conscious of a wound inflicted here, should consider herself dead. We are told that the human heart is placed in the left side : there is a special fittingness in that, because our affections are ever inclined to the things of earth. Nor was the Psalmist ignorant of this, since he exclaimed in piteous accents, " My soul hath cleaved to the pavement : quicken Thou me according to Thy word." Neither was the Prophet Jeremias, who, however, would not have us to sink under the burden of our human condition and heaviness of heart, but calls out to us encouragingly, saying, " Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens." By these words, he is plainly exhorting us to transfer our heart from the left side to the right. Soldiers of this world, my brethren, are accustomed to carry their shields on their left side only. But let not us imitate them in this, that is, unless we wish to be numbered amongst those who manifestly fight for earthly interests and not for Christ. " No one," says the Apostle, " being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses." As if he should say, " No soldier of God carries his shield more to his left side than to his right."

Nevertheless, both sides must be protected. For

you have not forgotten the words of the Psalmist, "His truth shall *compass* thee with a shield." And the Apostle also says, "In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God . . . by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left." But perhaps it is not the same manner of defence that is prescribed for both sides. Let us therefore listen to Justice Itself, speaking to us in the Holy Scriptures. On the one hand it is said, "Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath," also, "In your patience you shall possess your souls"; and on the other, "Give not place to the devil," and, "Resist the devil and he will fly from you." Listen again to St. Paul telling you how you may guard both sides: "Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men." "For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may (not only cause the demons to pine away with envy, but also) put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." But shall we always require this protection? Shall we be always exposed on our two sides to the attacks of our enemies? No, my brethren. The time will come when they shall be unable to stand upright, not to speak of making an attack upon us. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." For the malice of men shall then have no power to hurt us, and we shall be as little afraid of the legions of devils as of so many swarms of worms or flies. We shall gaze upon them as fearlessly as the children of Israel, after crossing the Red Sea, contemplated the drowning Egyptians with their horses and chariots submerged in the waters. And we also, but with more joy and security, shall "sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified, the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea."

EIGHTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Resurrection of the Body, and on the Reasons why the Just shall rejoice at the sufferings of the Wicked.

"But thou shalt consider with thy eyes, and shalt see the reward of the wicked."

Sometimes, dearest brethren, my discourses to you would be shorter than they are, if the opportunity for making them were oftener permitted me. I think you must have occasionally noticed this for yourselves: that the sermons are brief in proportion to their frequency. But whenever I am so detained by the malice of the times * that—although much against my will—I have to desist, perhaps for several days together, from the duty of exhorting and consoling you: no one, as it seems to me, ought to wonder if I endeavour to make up for lost time by prolonging my lectures according as the interval between them has been wider. Let this serve as an apology both for the prolixity of yesterday's discourse and for the brevity of to-day's, to which it is also the preface. For I am afraid some of you were dissatisfied with the last sermon as having been too long, and that some may be dissatisfied with the present as too short; and that some more may be inclined to find fault, not so much with the length of

* Cf. Matthew vi. 34. By "the malice of the times" the Saint means the distracting occupations which took up so much of his time and often obliged him to leave his monastery.—(Translator.)

the one or the shortness of the other, as with the succession of short and long. But now to begin.

"His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noon-day devil. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh to thee." I have given you in the preceding discourses the thoughts which Truth has vouchsafed to inspire me with in connection with these verses, explaining how the same Truth shields the faithful soul from temptations during life, and from perils at the hour of death. The Royal Prophet, in another psalm, refers more briefly to these two benefits, saying to the Lord, "By Thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and through my God I shall go over the wall," because, namely, with God for his Guide, he could walk through life without any fear of stumbling, and should meet with no obstacle at his departure hence. In the first part of this verse, therefore, the Psalmist promises himself a frequent deliverance out of the hands of his enemies, and in the second full and perfect security. As for the verse which comes next in the psalm I am expounding, viz., "But thou shalt consider with thy eyes and shalt see the reward of the wicked," I believe these words contain a promise of no little happiness. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh to thee. But thou shalt consider with thy eyes, and shalt see the reward of the wicked." Such is the promise. Let it be so, I pray Thee, O Lord, let it be so. "Let them be confounded that persecute me, and let not me be confounded; let them be afraid,

and let not me be afraid " ; yea, and let them fall also, but let me stand fast.

It appears to me, my brethren, that here, in this short verse, the Prophet is manifestly proclaiming the immortality of the soul and confirming our faith in a bodily resurrection. For he clearly intimates that I shall survive to see the downfall of the demons, and shall contemplate with these eyes of flesh their final retribution. For it is not said simply, " Thou shalt consider with eyes," but, " Thou shalt consider with *thy* eyes," * with those very eyes which now " languish through poverty " and " fail whilst I hope in my God." And in truth, brethren, our eyes do fail us whilst we gaze in hope. " For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for ? " as the Apostle says ; because " hope that is seen is not hope " at all. Therefore with those same eyes which now thou dost not presume so much as to lift up to heaven, with those same eyes which so often at present overflow with tears and are worn away with multiplied sorrows, it is with those very eyes, I say, " thou shalt consider and shalt see the reward of the wicked." Think not that new organs of sight shall be given thee ; no, but the former shall be restored. But wherefore do I speak of the eye, which, although the smallest is nevertheless the noblest and most useful of our bodily members ? For " this my hope is laid up in my bosom," that, according to the promise of Truth Itself, not a single hair of our heads shall perish.

But perhaps the reason why it is especially promised us that we shall see with our eyes is this, because here

* " Non enim simpliciter oculis, sed oculis, ait, tuis considerabis." According to the Latin idiom, the explicit use of the possessive pronoun, where (as here) it is already implied in the context, expresses some degree of emphasis.—(Translator.)

below it seems to be the sovereign desire of the human soul to see good things. Hence the Psalmist says, "I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." That is, he desires to have the upper windows of his body opened wide to the light of God, longing to walk by sight rather than by faith. "Faith (as you know) cometh by hearing," not from sight. According to St. Paul, it is "the substance of the things to be hoped for, the evidence of the things that appear not." Consequently, in faith, just as in hope, the eye fails us, and it is the ear alone that can profit us. "The Lord God hath opened my ear," says the Prophet Isaias. But the day will come when He shall also open our eyes. The time will come when no longer shall it be said to the soul, "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear"; but rather, "Lift up thine eyes and behold." Behold what? Surely the treasures of joy and exultation which the Lord God shall plentifully pour out upon her. What? Not alone those good things, which although they cannot be seen in this life, can at least be heard of and believed; but also those whereof the Apostle says, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man (to conceive) what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." For at the resurrection, the eye shall be able to take in more than the ear, or even the mind takes in at present. It is, as I think, on account of the soul's most ardent desire to see what she already has heard of and believes, that another illustrious herald of the future resurrection has also made particular reference to the eyes: "I shall be clothed again with my skin," says holy Job, "and in my flesh I shall see my God; Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall

behold, and not another ; this my hope is laid up in my bosom."

Perhaps, however, there is in these words of the Patriarch, " and *my* eyes shall behold," as also in those of the Psalmist, " Thou shalt consider with *thy* eyes," a special significance, which requires to be examined more attentively. Do you suppose, my brethren, that the eyes with which I now see are truly mine ? No, evidently they are not. Once, indeed, they appeared to be mine, because they also, as you know, belonged to the portion of the paternal inheritance which I, the younger son, received of my Father and so badly administered. For I soon wasted and squandered it all. The law of sin occupied my members, and death freely entered in through my windows, because I had now become the slave of sin and death. Yea, I was truly a miserable slave, not to a human master, but to foul and disgusting swine. For I did not even serve in the condition of a hired labourer, but absolutely as a thrall. How indeed can it be thought that I received wages, since even food was denied me, and such food as was worse than the hunger ? For when I would fain have filled myself " with the husks the swine did eat, no man gave unto " me ; so that although I lived with the swine, I was not allowed to feast with the swine. Moreover, how could that eye have been truly mine which " hath wasted my soul " ? Thus, I was in a manner compelled at last to return His gift to the Giver, in order that He might recover from the usurping tyrant what I had proved unable to defend.

Consider more carefully, dearest brethren, and ponder well by whose power or by what power you have escaped the intolerable yoke of the spiritual Pharao, so

that " you no longer yield your members as instruments of iniquity unto sin," and sin no longer " reigns in your mortal body." It certainly was not by your own. No, " the Right Hand of the Lord hath wrought strength." It has been His doing, to Whom alone nothing is impossible. Do not say, then, " our mighty hand, and not the Lord, hath done all these things," but make the true and salutary acknowledgment that all is due to the grace of God. And let no one doubt that he must be constantly on his guard, lest, whilst still the days are evil and there is no security for man, he should ever presume to entertain the thought of demanding back his " portion of substance " from the keeping of so kind and provident a Trustee, and of resuming a perilous, or rather a pernicious freedom of administration. If the Father is jealous, it is of our interests He is jealous. Neither is it out of envy, but according to His loving providence, that He commands us to leave the whole inheritance in His own care ; for He knows well that we should lose it. But when we shall have arrived at that great and holy city whose borders " He hath laid out in peace," where no hostile incursions need be dreaded, then, my brethren, not only will He restore us to ourselves, but He will give us Himself in addition. In the meantime, let us turn away from our own wills, and let us never be so rash as to usurp dominion over the members we have consecrated to God, knowing that it is a very grave sin of sacrilege to use what has been solemnly devoted to piety for the purposes of vanity, curiosity, pleasure, or for any other such ungodly ends. " Know you not," says the Apostle, " that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are

not your own ? " Again he says, " The body is not for fornication." Then for what is it ? Thinkest thou, my brother, that it is for thee ? Let it be so, by all means, let thy body be at thine own free disposal, provided, however, that thou canst, by thine own strength, either deliver it from the yoke of passion, or at least preserve it after it has been delivered. But if thou canst not do this, nay, rather because thou canst not do this, St. Paul tells thee that thy " body is not for fornication," nor for thee, but " for the Lord " ; and that it should now " serve justice unto sanctification," lest it become again the slave of corruption and its " last state be worse than the first." " I speak a human thing," says the same Apostle in another place, " because of the infirmity of your flesh. For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification." But, as he tells us himself in this very passage, it is only on account of our present weakness that he gives us this injunction. For when that which " is sown in weakness shall rise in power," there shall then be no need of serving. Why should we have any doubt that God will restore us to ourselves there where liberty can be enjoyed with security, and security can dispense with precaution ? Why should we not believe that, since the great Father of the family will then place the faithful servant over all His goods, much more He will give him back his liberty ? Therefore " thou shalt (then) consider with thy eyes and shalt see the reward of the wicked," provided that thou dost sincerely and practically acknowledge that those eyes belong to God during the present life rather than to thee. For even apart altogether from the inviolable obligation

of thy vow (whereof I have been speaking) by which, renouncing thine own will, thou hast consecrated to the service of God that body thou couldst not of thyself deliver from the slavery of sin: independently, I say, of that engagement, how canst thou consider as thine own those members in which the opposing law of sin still dwells at least, even if it does not reign; and in which thy second enemy, the penalty of sin, not only dwells but even has the upper hand and rules with unchallenged sway? Dost thou regard as thine own that body which "is dead because of sin," or as belonging to the soul which it "weigheth down" unceasingly? But if anyone wishes to call it his own, there seems to be only one sense in which he can truly do so: that is to say, he may call it his own burden or his own prison. Otherwise, how, for instance, canst thou call the eyes wherewith thou seest thine own, during this life at any rate, since, whether thou willest or not, they are so often overpowered by sleep, dimmed by smoke, injured by dust, clouded by noxious humours, tortured by sharp pain, and finally extinguished by the death of the body? But hereafter they shall indeed be thine, when none of these things shall exist any longer to trouble them. Then, at last, "thou shalt consider with thy eyes," and use them according to thy pleasure, with equal freedom and security. For then thou shalt have no need to say, "Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity," because they shall contemplate Truth in all its purity. Much less needest thou fear lest death should enter in through thy windows, for death itself shall then, at last, have been destroyed. Perhaps, however, thou art afraid that thy eyes shall be dazzled by such an excess of light, where each of the

just shall shine as the sun? Good reason in truth shouldst thou have for this fear, were not thy eyes, with thy other bodily members, destined to share in the glory of the resurrection.

"Thou shalt consider with thy eyes, and shalt see the reward of the wicked." That, my brethren, will no doubt be a bitter torment for the damned, the crown and consummation of all their evils. For we may suppose that it would be some consolation to them if, in their sufferings, they could escape the knowledge, or at least avoid the gaze of those whom in life they had maliciously persecuted. But, it may be asked, if our contemplation of their misery adds so materially to their punishment, what is its necessity to us, or what its use? What addition can it make to our happiness? For surely there can be nothing more impious, more inhuman, more abominable, than the wish to feast one's eyes on the torments of another, no matter how inimical, no matter how depraved, and to take pleasure in the contemplation of his anguish? Nevertheless, just as "the wicked shall see and shall be angry, he shall gnash his teeth and pine away" (for the blessed shall be called up to heaven before the reprobate are cast down into the dungeons of everlasting fire, in order that the latter may be more fiercely tormented by the sight of the glory they have lost): so "the just shall see and shall rejoice," beholding the misery from which they have escaped. Consequently, in that terrible and final separation, on the one hand, the sight of the sheep shall fill the goats with most bitter jealousy; and on the other, the elect shall discover in the doom of the reprobate the most powerful motives for thanksgiving and praise. For, plainly, the thanksgiving of the just

would not be so magnificent, unless, along with the inconceivable happiness which they enjoy, they also beheld "the reward of the wicked," from a participation in which (as they faithfully and gratefully remember) it is only the pure mercy of the Redeemer that has saved them. Neither would the wicked be consumed with such envious rage, if they did not see the just ascending before their eyes to the kingdom of unutterable bliss, whilst they groan to hear themselves condemned to the stench, the horror, and the everlasting fires of the infernal pit, and to all the long agonies of a death that is immortal. "There," says the Saviour, "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth": weeping, because of the fire that shall never be extinguished; gnashing of teeth, because of the worm that dieth not; weeping from profitless grief; gnashing of teeth from impotent fury: weeping from an excess of suffering; gnashing of teeth from the violence of wasting envy, and the obstinancy of unrepented malice. To this end, therefore, "thou shalt see the reward of the wicked," in order that thou mayest lose even the power to show thyself ungrateful to thy Redeemer, by the sight of the awful danger out of which He has delivered thee.

Yet this is not the only benefit the just shall derive from seeing the reward of the wicked. The same sight shall give them at last perfect security. For they shall no longer have cause to fear anything from the malice either of wicked men or of apostate angels, after beholding them falling, a thousand at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, and not alone falling, but falling into hell. Do you think, brethren, that they can be any sooner delivered from all apprehension, from all suspicion of that old serpent, "more subtle

than any of the beasts of the earth," particularly when they remember how he seduced the first woman in paradise—do you think there can be perfect security for the just until they see him, now with his whole body, thrust down into the avenging flames, and separated from them by an impassably wide abyss ?

There is yet another benefit which shall accrue to thee from the contemplation of the "reward of the wicked." It is this, that thine own dignity and glory will appear all the greater in thine eyes from the contrast with the ignominy and ugliness of the reprobate. For contrary qualities when juxtaposed appear each to receive an access of intensity. Thus if I place side by side a black object and a white object, the former will seem to have become blacker than before, and the latter whiter. But I will offer you a more reliable testimony to this from the Psalmist : "The just shall rejoice," he says, "when he shall see the revenge." And wherefore ? Because "he shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner." Manifestly, then, he shall not stain but rather cleanse his hands in the sinner's blood ; so that what defiles the one purifies the other, and that which makes the one more loathsome renders the other more beautiful.

Of the three reasons I have assigned why the just shall rejoice in the punishment of the wicked, there is none, I believe, which can appear repellent to our human instincts, even in our mortal condition. Yet it is not from any of these motives that Divine Wisdom will laugh at the sinner's destruction, as most certainly He will. For He Who cannot lie has plainly predicted this, saying, "Because I called and you refused ; I stretched out My hand, and there was none that regarded . . . I also will laugh in your destruction, and

will mock when that shall come to you which you feared, when sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand." Now, what can there be pleasing to Wisdom in the ruin of the unwise, except His own most just disposition and most righteous ordinance? And evidently that which shall give pleasure to Wisdom, shall also of necessity please each of the wise. Therefore, think it not strange that it is promised thee, "Thou shalt consider with thy eyes, and shalt see the reward of the wicked," since thou shalt even laugh at their destruction. Not that, from a certain monstrous cruelty, thou shalt find pleasure in contemplating the mere torments of the damned; but because the beautiful order established by divine providence will produce an inexpressible delight in him who has zeal for justice and the love of equity. For, where, under the light of uncreated Truth, thou shalt clearly and perfectly behold everything arranged in the most admirable order, his own place assigned to everyone, or rather everyone assigned to his own place, how canst thou help feeling a complacency in all things, and magnifying in all things the great Disposer of all? Very appropriately, therefore, did the Apostle Peter say of the "son of perdition" that he went to "his own place," because he "burst asunder in the midst" in the air, a confederate of the aerial powers, as if heaven had refused to receive and earth to support the betrayer of Him Who, as being true God and true man, had come down from heaven to "work salvation in the midst of the earth."

Accordingly, "thou shalt consider with thy eyes and shalt see the reward of the wicked." And this spectacle shall enhance thy happiness; firstly, by showing

thee what thou hast escaped ; secondly, by confirming thee in absolute security ; thirdly, by the contrast with thine own blissful state ; fourthly, by satisfying thy burning zeal for justice.* For then it will be no longer the time for showing mercy, but for exercising justice ; nor shall any compassion be felt for the impious then or ever after, since there shall be no longer any hope of their amendment. We shall have then laid aside that softness of our human infirmity which, during the present life, charity uses for the salvation of souls, gathering together in the ample folds of its wide-stretching net good fish and bad, that is to say, both the pleasant and the painful emotions of the mind. But this only happens whilst the net is in the sea. For as soon as it is drawn ashore shall be verified what is written, "they chose out the good, but the bad they cast forth." By this is meant that after the present life, charity shall indeed still "rejoice with them that rejoice," but certainly it can no more "weep with them that weep." Otherwise how shall we judge this world (according to the Saviour's promise) unless forgetting that affection of tender sympathy, we are "brought into the cellar of wine" ? † Hence the Psalmist says, "I will enter into the powers of the Lord : O Lord, I will be mindful of Thy justice alone." Even in this life a human judge is not permitted to make allowance for the poverty of the culprit, or to show compassion for him. All such feelings of sympathy have perforce to be suppressed, no matter what

* The same reasons are assigned by St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. Supplem., q. xciv. a. 3. Cf. also a. 1 and 2.—(Translator.)

† That is to say, we shall be filled with holy zeal, of which wine is the symbol. See Sermon XLIX. on the Canticle of Canticles.—(Translator.)

the effort may cost us, and the sentence must be pronounced in accordance with the requirements of strict justice. How much more, then, shall that be fulfilled which is written, "Their judges, joined to the Rock, have been swallowed up," there where no repugnance of mind shall be felt, no disrelish for duty experienced? Then indeed the judges shall be swallowed up altogether in a fiery zeal for justice, and shall imitate the solidity of the Rock (Christ) to Whom they are joined. "Joined to the Rock" they truly are, since they "have left all things and followed" Him alone. For this is what the Rock Himself said in reply to Peter's question as to how He would reward His disciples, "I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of His Majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And the same is predicted by the Prophet Isaias where he announces that "The Lord will come to judgment with the ancients of His people." Does it seem to you, my brethren, that anything soft or flexible shall be found in the judges when thus "joined to the Rock"? "He who is joined to the Lord," says the Apostle, "is one spirit," to which I will add, he who is joined to the Rock is one stone with Him. It is for this union with the Rock the Psalmist yearns when he cries out, "It is good for me to adhere to my God." In this way, therefore, "their judges, joined to the Rock, have been swallowed up." Oh, what a grace of sweet familiarity! What an eminence of honour! What a precious ground of confidence! What a singular motive for perfect security!

But can there be conceived anything so terrible, anything so full of anxiety and killing agitation, as to

stand for judgment before that awful tribunal and to await the still uncertain sentence from a Judge of such rigorous justice? St. Paul tells us that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." O my brethren, let us judge ourselves now in this life. Let us strive by an anticipated judgment to escape that dreadful suspense and uncertainty. God will not judge what has been judged already. And just as "some men's sins are manifest, going before to judgment," so too is it with the piety of other men. And therefore also, just as the former, without awaiting the Judge's sentence, are drawn down into hell by the sheer weight of their own crimes: so the latter, with perfect liberty of spirit, unhesitatingly ascend the thrones prepared for them. Oh, how happy is the poverty of those who leave all voluntarily, in order to follow Thee, Lord Jesus! Happy and blessed it surely is, since it can render us so secure, yea, and so glorious amid the ruins of a crashing world, at that terror-inspiring scrutiny of merits, before that array of impartial judges!

But let us now hear what answer the faithful and loving soul makes to promises so magnificent, lest perhaps she should show herself either diffident or possessed of a confidence that is not expedient. She says, therefore: "Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope." What answer could be more modest or more pious? Nor could she receive any more fitting rejoinder than the words which immediately follow: "Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge."

But I have to ask your forgiveness, brethren. For I think I have to-day also somewhat exceeded the bounds of my promised brevity.

NINTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Advantage of living for God alone, and putting all our hope in Him.

"Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope: thou hast made the Most High thy refuge."

On this occasion also, my brethren, you shall hear something concerning the promise of the Father, the expectation of the children, the end of our present exile, the reward of our labour, and the fruit of our captivity. Hard indeed is our captivity, not only that which we endure in common with all men, and which is the general condition of the human race; but also that whereby, in order the more effectually to mortify our wills and to lose our lives in this world, we have bound ourselves with the fetters of so rigorous a rule and condemned ourselves to a prison of such severe asceticism. Surely a most miserable bondage, yet only if suffered against our will, instead of by free election. As the case is, however, we have voluntarily sacrificed our liberty to God, and there is no other violence done to our will than that which comes from the will itself. But clearly there must be some cause for this. So there is, my brethren, and a cause than which none greater can be conceived. I mean the love of God. Does it seem to you that anything which is done or suffered for the love of God, however great, however laborious it may be, ought to excite our compassion? But if occasionally the magnitude of the tribulation awakens in our souls a feeling of pity,

that sentiment is soon changed to congratulation by the remembrance of the motive. Besides, you do not need to be told that all our good works are done not only *for* God, but also *by* God. "For it is God Who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." * He is, therefore, the Author of the good we do, just as He is its Rewarder and its whole Recompense. Hence that sovereign Good, although in Himself absolutely simple, appears to be in us a double Cause of virtuous actions, namely, final Cause and efficient. Rightly, then, does the Apostle say, not only that we persevere in our life of multiplied labours, but also that "in all these things we overcome because of Him That hath loved us." But is it not *by* Him also that we overcome? Undoubtedly. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also *by* Christ doth our comfort abound."

The expression, "For God's sake," is common enough and familiar enough; and, although often idly uttered, it is an expression full of profoundest meaning. The words are constantly on the lips of men, even of those whose hearts are strangers to the sentiment they express. For whenever anyone now solicits alms or any other kind of assistance, it is always for God's

* This, of course, must not be understood in a sense which would exclude the *free* co-operation of our own wills with the divine action. "It is usual with the inspired authors," says St. Augustine, "to represent God as doing what the creature does by His grace. . . . What thou dost by His grace, He is said to do, because without Him thou wouldst not do it" (In Ps. lii. n. 5). And commenting on the passage before us, he says, "God worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, not because we do not will ourselves and accomplish ourselves, but because without His help we should neither will nor accomplish anything of good" (*De Gratia Christi*, c. xxv.). That this is also St. Bernard's doctrine is manifest from his work *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, c. ii.—(Translator.)

sake. And some are even ready to ask things for God's sake which are not according to God, which they do not desire for the glory of God, but rather for the purpose of offending God. Nevertheless, these words are truly "living and efficacious" (as is every word of God) when, instead of being uttered thoughtlessly, or conventionally, or from mere habit, or as a means of persuasion, they proceed (as they ought) from the fulness of devotion and from a pure intention of the mind. My brethren, "the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof"; and when the world shall fail, then we shall realise how unprofitable and insecure is everything that is done for its sake. For when the foundation itself lacks stability, how can it render stable any of the things which it appears to support? Therefore the Apostle warns us that "he who soweth in his flesh, of his flesh also shall reap corruption"; because, namely, "all flesh is grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field." But when the grass withers, its flower must necessarily fade and fall. He Who alone is, is alone an unfailing Cause. And it is not the "flower of the field," but "the word of our Lord (that) endureth for ever." "Heaven and earth shall pass," says the Lord Himself, "but My words shall not pass."

Consequently, my dearest brethren, you have done what is very prudent and very profitable in choosing to "keep hard ways for the sake of the words of (His) lips," and to sow your seed in a field where the smallest portion of it cannot fail to fructify. Even "he who soweth sparingly" shall not lose his seed, but "shall also reap sparingly." No one that sows at all remains without a harvest. For we know by Whom it has

been promised that whosoever shall give even a cup of cold water for His name's sake "shall not lose his reward." Nevertheless, is it not true that "with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again," that he who gives but a cup of cold water shall not receive the same reward as another who gives not water but his very blood, and so drinks of the chalice offered him by Christ? This chalice of the Saviour is no cup of cold water, but a "goodly chalice which inebriateth," "a cup of strong wine full of mixture." For my Lord Jesus alone possesses pure wine, because He alone is Himself perfectly pure, and alone also "can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed." Surely He alone has the pure wine, Who, according to His Divine Nature, is that Wisdom "which reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity . . . and no defiled thing cometh to her"; and according to His Human Nature "did no sin, neither was guile found in His Mouth." He alone has tasted death, not from the necessity of His condition, but by the free choice of His own will. Neither did He die for His own profit, because "He hath no need of our goods"; nor yet in order to make us a return of "grace for grace," since He gave His life, not for the sake of those who were already His friends, but for the purpose of gaining friends, of making friends out of enemies. "For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Or perhaps it were more true to say that He died for those who were His friends already, not yet indeed loving friends, nevertheless friends beloved. For "in this is (grace): not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us." Do you wish to know by how much His love for us anticipated

our love for Him? Then listen to St. Paul: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity; Who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the purpose of His will: unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son." How is it possible that we were not beloved in Him in Whom we were chosen? Or how is it possible that we were not pleasing in Him in Whom we were graced? Thus, therefore, "did Christ . . . according to the time, die for the ungodly," but according to predestination He died for His friends and brothers.

In all these respects, therefore, His wine, and His alone, is found to be pure. Amongst other martyrs, there is not a single one who can presume to say that to him may not be applied the words of the Prophet Isaias, "Thy wine is mingled with water." * First, because, "no one is free from stain" in this life, no one can glory in the possession of a perfectly pure heart. Secondly, because all must, sooner or later, undergo the penalty of death. Thirdly, because by laying down their lives for Christ, they purchase at a cheap price a blissful immortality: but woe to them if they are ashamed to render Him testimony by their blood.† Fourthly, because at best they make but a

* He means that in the case of none of the holy martyrs was charity found free from all human imperfection.—(Translator.)

† That is to say, their motive is not altogether pure, since they are influenced, on the one hand, by the hope of heaven, and, on the other, by the fear of hell.—(Translator.)

very poor and inadequate return for the immense and gratuitous love which He has already shown them. Nevertheless, He Who is Himself without "mixture" does not disdain even such impure wine, so that the Apostle can say with confidence, "I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His Body." * Consequently, although one and the same "penny" of eternal life is rendered equally to all the elect, nevertheless in it "star differeth from star in glory," and "one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars." So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. For although the "house" is one, it nevertheless contains "many mansions." Hence, as regards the eternity and the sufficiency of the happiness, he who has little merit is nothing short, and he who has much has nothing over. But with respect to eminence and distinction of merit, every man shall receive what is proportionate to his labour, so that nothing may be lost of all that has been sown in Christ.

These remarks have been made, my brethren, for the purpose of commending to your esteem the wonderful spiritual beauty of the words I am now discussing: "Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope." Whatever, therefore, is to be done, whatever is to be avoided, whatever to be suffered, whatever to be desired: "Thou, O Lord, art my hope." This is the cause of all the promises made to me: this is likewise the whole and sole reason of my expectation. Let others rely on their merits; let them boast of having borne "the burden of the day and the heat," and of "fasting twice in the

* St. Paul thus seems to imply that his own sufferings were worthy of being united to and of supplementing Christ's.—(Translator.)

week," and of not being " as the rest of men " : " but it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God." Other men may hope in other things, this one in the knowledge of letters, that one in the wisdom of the world, a third in the nobility of his descent, a fourth in the loftiness of his dignity, a fifth in some similar vanity : but for Thy sake, O Lord, " I count all things to be but loss," yea, " and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ," " because Thou, O Lord, art my hope." Let him who likes put his hope in uncertain riches ; for my part, I will not look elsewhere but to Thee for the very necessaries of life, trusting to that saying of Thine, on account of which I have abjured the world : " Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." For " to Thee is the poor man left : Thou wilt be a helper to the orphan." If then, rewards are offered to me, it is through Thee I will hope to obtain them ; " if battles should rise up against me, in (Thee) will I be confident." Let the world rage, let the devil burn with fury, let the flesh rebel against the spirit : spite of all, in Thee will I hope.

My brethren, to entertain such sentiments is to live by faith. But no one can say from his heart, " Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope," except the man who is interiorly persuaded by the Holy Ghost to do what the Prophet recommends in the words, " Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee," which the Apostle Peter also counsels, where he writes, " Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." For if these are really our sentiments, why should we hesitate to renounce all other wretched, vain, unprofitable, delusive hopes, and with all the energy of our

minds and all the fervour of our spirits to cling to this one solid, perfect, blissful hope? If there is anything impossible to the Lord, if there is anything even difficult to Him, seek out some other in whom you may place your trust. But He can do all things by His mere word. What is easier than to speak a word? But I would have you understand clearly what is meant by this speech of God. I say, then, that if He wills to save us we shall infallibly be delivered; if it is His good pleasure to vivify us, there is "life in His good will"; if He decides to give us an eternal reward, it is lawful for Him to do what He pleases. Perhaps you are now satisfied concerning His power to assist you, but are yet in doubt with respect to His good will? However, the "testimonies (of His good will) are become exceedingly credible." Listen to the words of Christ Himself: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." When indeed will God be wanting to the man who puts his hope in Him, since this is what He has so earnestly admonished us to do? Evidently, then, He will not abandon those who make Him their hope. As the Psalmist says, "The Lord will help them and deliver them: and He will rescue them from the wicked and save them." Wherefore? On account of what merits? The Prophet immediately proceeds to explain: "Because they have hoped in Him." A most sweet reason, truly, yet also most efficacious and irresistible. For this hope is real justice, not the justice of the law, but "the justice that is of faith." "He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation. I will deliver him." Come, my brethren, reckon up all your tribulations. Each one of you may say with the Prophet:

"According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts (shall) give joy to my soul." That is, provided you do not seek for consolation elsewhere, provided you cry to Him, provided you hope in Him, provided you make not anything low and earthly, but only the Most High your refuge. "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded?" It were easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one word of His to come to naught.

"Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge." To this asylum the seducer has no access; to this height the calumniator cannot mount; to this retreat the wicked accuser of the brethren finds no admittance. For, as you remember from the beginning of the psalm, these words are addressed to him "that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High," fleeing thither from the "pusillanimity of spirit and the storm." We have a double necessity for running to this refuge and dwelling in this aid, because as the Apostle says, there are "combats without (and) fears within." There would be less need of having recourse to the Lord, if either our interior strength could support courageously the tumult outside, or if external peace allowed our pusillanimity to remain undisquieted. "Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge." My brethren, let us often run for safety to this refuge. It is a strongly fortified place, where we shall have nothing to fear from the enemy. Would to God we were allowed to remain there always! But that is not for this present time. What is now a refuge shall, however, become one day a dwelling-place, and an everlasting dwelling-place. Meanwhile, since we are not as yet permitted to make our abode there, let us at least visit it often. For against

every temptation, against every tribulation, against every kind of necessity, this city of refuge is open to shelter us; the mother's arms are extended to welcome us; the "clefts of the rock" are ready to receive us; "the bowels of the mercy of our God" invite us to enter. Little wonder, then, if *he* does not succeed in escaping from his enemies, whosoever despises such a refuge.

It seems to me, my brethren, that the observations already offered would suffice as an exposition of my present text, had the Prophet said here what we find in another psalm, "For in Thee I have put my trust." But his words in this place, "Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope," may well appear to signify something greater and more sublime, inasmuch as they declare that the Lord is not only the foundation, but also the object of his hope. For the object of our hope has a better right to be called simply our hope than has the reason thereof. Doubtless there are some who hope to receive and long to receive from the Lord certain temporal or spiritual favours: but perfect charity desires nothing, thirsts for nothing save what is supreme, the Sovereign Good, and exclaims with all the eagerness of ardent love, "For what have I in heaven, and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God That is my portion for ever." Both these species of desire are very beautifully comprehended in this short verse from the Prophet Jeremias, "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." Observe with what prudence he varies the number, using the plural when speaking of them that hope in the Lord, because this

appears common to many ; but referring in the singular to the seeker of the Lord, because it is a sign of singular purity, of singular grace, of singular perfection, not only to seek nothing save from the Lord, but to seek nothing even from Him save Himself. And if He is so good to the former, what shall He be to the latter ? Rightly, therefore, is it said to the soul that thus seeks the Lord : " Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge." For the soul possessed of such a thirst for God does not wish, like Peter, to build for Him a tabernacle on an earthly mountain, nor yet, like Mary Magdalen, to touch Him with the hand of flesh, but rather cries out to Him with the Spouse in the Canticle, " Flee away, my Beloved : be like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." And that, because she has heard Him saying, " If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father ; for the Father is greater than I." She has also heard Him saying, " Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." And so, being now enlightened as to the heavenly counsel, she exclaims with the Apostle, " And though we have known Christ according to the flesh, now we know Him so no longer." " Upon the mountains of Bether," says the Spouse. That is, she desires to reach Him where He is enthroned at the Right Hand of the Father, to Whom He is no longer inferior,* but Most

* This of course does not mean either that Christ as God was inferior to the Father before His Ascension, or that after the Ascension His Human Nature was elevated to an equality with the Divine. The Saint is speaking according to what was *apparent* : during His life on earth the Word Incarnate *appeared* to be less than the Father. Or the meaning may be that, after the Ascension, Christ, even in His Human Nature, began to receive *manifestly* the same supreme worship as is paid to the Father. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxv. a. 1-2 ; also A Lapide, *Comment. in Joan.* xiv. 28.—(Translator.)

High as the Most High, above all Powers and Principalities, above Angels and Archangels, above Cherubim and Seraphim,—for these are the only mountains in Bether, which signifies "the house of God." "Now this is eternal life," my dearest brethren, "that (we) may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent," and Who with Him is one true God, over all things, and blessed for ever. Amen.

TENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On Sin and its Punishment, and on the Deliverance from both which the Resurrection shall bring us.

"There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle."

Brethren, it is no discovery of mine, nor is it anything novel to you, but something very familiar, the truth, namely, that as regards the principal objects of our faith it is more easy to know and more dangerous to be ignorant of what they are not than what they are. It seems to me that the same holds good of hope, and no less than of faith. For the human mind, from its experience of evils, so great and so many, understands far more easily what it is to be without suffering and misery than what it is to be in the enjoyment of bliss. There is an intimate relation between faith and hope. The happiness which the former believes shall be, the latter looks forward to enjoy with confident expectation. Justly, therefore, does the Apostle define faith as "the substance of things to be hoped for." For surely no one can hope unless he first believes in the object of his hope, any more than one can paint a picture on the empty air. Faith, therefore, seems to say, "God has prepared a treasure of inconceivable happiness for His faithful servants"; hope, "It is for me that happiness is prepared"; and then charity, "As for me, I am

already speeding to the enjoyment of that happiness." But, as I observed before, it is extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to form an adequate idea of the good things in store for us, except perhaps for one to whom the Lord Himself reveals by His Spirit "what things God hath prepared for them that love Him," which as the Apostle says, " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man " to conceive. There is undoubtedly a certain kind of imperfect perfection (if I may be allowed the expression) possible to us even in this life, otherwise St. Paul would not have said, " Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded," which must evidently be interpreted in accordance with his previous words, " Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect." But to whatever perfection a man may attain whilst living in the flesh, he will always be obliged to confess with the same Apostle, " Now I know (only) in part," and, " We see now through a glass, in a dark manner, but then face to face."* Consequently, that kind of happiness which is known to be more easily intelligible to man, is more frequently proposed to him in the Scriptures, out of a loving consideration for his weakness. For it is natural for the afflicted to repute as highest happiness deliverance from their miseries, and to esteem a life without suffering or sorrow as the most blissful of all lives. Hence the Royal Prophet sings in one of the psalms, " Turn, O my soul, into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee ";

* As to the question whether any mere viator has ever enjoyed the Beatific Vision, even momentarily, cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. clxxv. a. 111 ; also St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, vol. ii. pp. 151-2 (note).—(Translator.)

and without making any mention of receiving other benefactions appertaining to happiness, he goes on, "For He hath delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling." By these words he plainly indicates how great a rest he deems it, and how great a benefit from God, to be delivered from tribulations and dangers.

Similiar to this in meaning shall be found the verse of the ninetieth psalm, which I have to examine to-day, namely, "There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." The signification of these words, appears to me to be manifest enough, and some of yourselves, probably, have already divined it. For you are not so uninstructed or so wanting in spiritual enlightenment, as not to be able to distinguish with ease between yourselves and your tabernacles on the one hand, and between the "evil" and the "scourge" on the other. You have even heard the Apostle saying, when he had "fought the good fight," that the time was at hand for the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle. But wherefore do I cite for you the words of St. Paul? As if, forsooth, a soldier could be ignorant of his own tabernacle and requiring to have it pointed out to him by means of a foreign example! Some, indeed, we behold who have changed their tabernacles into permanent dwellings of most shameful captivity, no longer living in them like soldiers in wartime, but rather as most wretched bondslaves. Nay, what is still more strangely perverse, some wander so far out of the right path, and arrive at such a degree of forgetfulness, such a pitch of spiritual madness, that they appear to identify themselves with their outward earthly tabernacle. For how can they be otherwise

than entirely forgetful, not only of God, but of themselves also, they, who, "as dead from the heart," devote all their attention to the body, and are so solicitous for their tabernacles as if they expected them to stand for ever? Nevertheless, these tabernacles are doomed to fall, and that in a very short time. Or, do you not consider those to be ignorant of themselves who are so occupied and engrossed in ministering to flesh and blood as if they judged themselves to be nothing distinct from these material elements; who so "receive their souls in vain," as if they were utterly unconscious that they have souls at all? "If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile," saith the Lord by His Prophet Jeremias, "thou shalt be as My Mouth." That is to say, "If thou wilt prudently distinguish between the external and material part of thy nature and the interior, spiritual part, in such a manner that thou wilt be more solicitous to defend the latter from evil than the former from the scourge, then thou shalt be as My Mouth." For the evil in question here is that whereof the Psalmist says in another place, "Decline from evil and do good." This is the evil which deprives thy soul of her Soul,* in that it "maketh a division between thee and God." And whilst it reigns in thee, as a body without a soul so is thy soul without God, utterly dead in herself, like one of those whom the Apostle declared to be "living without God in this world."

* God may be said to be the Soul of our souls in the sense that He is the Principle of their supernatural life just as they are the principle of natural life to our bodies. But beyond this the analogy does not hold. God and the soul do not complete each other essentially, as do soul and body, nor do they stand to each other in the relation of form and matter.—(Translator.)

However, I would not advise you to have a hatred even for your flesh. On the contrary, I would have you to love it, as given you to be your helper in this life, and the associate of your immortal felicity in the next. But let the soul love the body in such a manner that the spirit shall not seem to have been turned into flesh, and thus deserve to hear from the Lord the words of reproach, "My Spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh." Yes, my brethren, let the soul love her body: but let her love her own Soul much more dearly. Let Adam by all means love his Eve, yet not in such a way as to be more willing to obey her voice than the voice of God. For to be so loved is not expedient even for the flesh: I mean, if your love of it leads you to shelter it in this life from the scourge of paternal correction, whilst treasuring up against it the wrath of eternal damnation in the life to come. "Ye brood of vipers," said the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of penance." As if he should say in the words of the Psalmist, "Embrace discipline lest at any time the Lord be angry," that is: "submit to the rod of correction lest you should feel the bludgeon of vengeance." Why do carnal men say to us, "This manner of life is cruel: you have no compassion for your flesh?" I grant, we do not spare the flesh any more than the farmer spares the seed. Yet what kindness to the seed could be greater than such apparent cruelty? Is it not happier in being allowed to renew and multiply itself in the ground than if it were permitted to rot in the granary? Alas! "the beasts have rotted in their dung," as the Prophet Joel speaks. Is it thus *you*

spare your flesh ? We indeed may seem to be cruel in condemning our bodies to penance during this life, but you are much more cruel in sparing them. For even now our flesh " resteth in hope." : but consider to what dishonour your flesh is subjected here and what misery awaits it hereafter. " There shall no evil come to thee : nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." Here, my brethren, we have a double robe,* and a twofold immortality is commended to our desire. What causes death but the separation of soul and body ? Hence we speak of a dead body as soulless (*exanime*). But what causes this separation if not the scourges of the present life, the violence of pains of every description, and the corruption of the body itself, which are all the penalty of sin ? Justly, therefore, does our flesh fear and hate the scourge, which compels it to separate, with indescribable bitterness, from the sweet and honourable companionship of the soul. Nevertheless, it has to be endured, however unwillingly, until the hour when the soul returns to reanimate the body. And is it not better for thee to submit to pain in this life in such a manner that thou shalt escape it altogether in the next, and " the scourge shall (no more) come near thy tabernacle " ?

My brethren, I have already reminded you of what it is expedient for you never to forget, namely, that God is the true Life of your souls. But the soul too, may be separated from her Life, not by the scourge, as the body, but by the evil, the evil proper to the soul,

* Allusion to Apocalypse vi. 11 : " And white robes were given, to every one of them one ; and it was said to them that they should rest for a little while, till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were to be slain even as they, should be filled up "—when they should receive the second robe in the glorification of the flesh.—(Translator.)

which is nothing other than sin. Alas, dearest brethren! How can we take delight in frivolous occupations, how can we freely indulge our propensity to sloth, in the immediate neighbourhood of these two serpents, that are watching to take from us our double life, the life of our soul and the life of our body? How can we go to sleep in security? Is not negligence in presence of danger rather a sign of despair than of real security? We ought to desire indeed deliverance from both the scourge and the evil; yet sin is more to be dreaded than the penalty of sin. And we must be the more careful to avoid the evil than the scourge, in proportion as it is a greater misfortune and a more utter ruin for the soul to be separated from God than for the body to be separated from the soul. For when all sin has been entirely removed, it must needs be that the effect shall be taken away with the cause. Consequently, just as no evil can then "come to thee," so neither "shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." That is to say, suffering of every kind shall be as far removed from the body as sin from the soul. For, as you may notice, the Psalmist does not say, "There shall be no evil *in* thee," or "The scourge shall not be *in* thy tabernacle," but "There shall no evil *come to* thee, nor shall the scourge *come near* thy tabernacle."

There are some men, my brethren, in whom sin appears not only to dwell but even to dominate: so much so that it seems to have come as near to them as is possible, at least until it shall begin to reign in them in such a manner that never more can it cease to reign. You may meet with others in whom sin is still dwelling, yet no longer reigns or dominates. It has been plucked up, but not yet cast forth; it has been overthrown, but

not yet driven out. "But from the beginning it was not so," as is sufficiently evident. Before that primeval transgression of the divine command, not only did sin not reign in our first parents, but it did not even dwell in them. Nevertheless, it must be supposed to have come near them, even at that time, since it so easily obtained their consent and so speedily gained admission. Yea, and it was then nigh when God gave them solemn warning, in the words addressed to Adam, "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it (the tree of knowledge) thou shalt die the death." Happy, therefore, is our expectation and blessed our hope, since the promised resurrection shall make us so much more glorious than was our primitive condition.* For after the resurrection there shall be neither sin nor punishment, neither the evil nor the scourge. They shall never again, rather let me say, they never again can either dominate or dwell in our souls or bodies. "There shall no evil come to thee," says the Psalmist, "nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." And what can be farther away from thee than that can never come nigh thee?

But what are we doing, brethren? I fear we have been discovered in the act of transgressing our Rule. For, as you know, our common Abbot, the great St. Benedict, has appointed this hour, not for spiritual instruction, but for manual labour. However, I think he will easily pardon us, especially when he remembers that pious fraud whereby the monk Romanus ministered so faithfully to his wants of old, during the three years

* Hence the Church sings in the "Exultet" on Easter Saturday, "O certe necessarium Adae peccatum quod Christi morte deletum est! O felix culpa quae talem et tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!"—(Translator.)

he lived in the cavern. This holy man, so we read,* was wont on certain days to steal an hour from the vigilance of his superior, in order to bring surreptitiously to the Saint a portion of the bread given him for his own use. As for me, dearest brethren, I make no doubt that many amongst you possess in themselves a greater abundance of spiritual refreshment than I can communicate : but the little I have is not lost to me by being shared with you. Nay, rather I shall enjoy whatever the Lord may be pleased to bestow, with all the more sweetness and security, when I enjoy it in common with you. This kind of treasure is not lessened by communication : it rather increases according as it is dispensed. Yet if I preach to you more frequently than the custom of our Order sanctions, I do so, not by my own presumption, but at the bidding of my venerable brother-abbots, who have enjoined on me what, nevertheless, they consider unlawful for themselves ; because they know that there is special reason and special necessity for me to make myself useful in this way. For were I able to join in your manual labour, I should not be addressing you now. Participation in your toil would indeed be a more efficacious manner of preaching and more acceptable to my own conscience. But since that is denied me through the merit of my sins, and the manifold infirmities (so well known to you) of this burdensome body, as well as by the necessities of the present times, God grant that, saying and not doing, I may deserve to be found even the least in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

* Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great, lib. ii. c. i.

ELEVENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Ways of Men, the Ways of the Demons, the Ways of the Holy Angels, and the Ways of the Lord.

"For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

My brethren, it is written in the Prophet Jeremias, and written truly, that we owe it to "the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed," because He has not delivered us into the hands of our enemies. His Eye of incomparable love ever watches over us, without interruption, as without weariness. Hence the Psalmist says, "Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep, That keepeth Israel." That is very necessary for us. For *he* also shall neither slumber nor sleep, that fighteth against Israel. And just as the Lord is solicitous for us and hath care of us; so too is Satan solicitous how he may injure and destroy us, and his only care is to prevent the soul that has abandoned her God from ever returning to Him. But we either pay no attention at all, or we pay too little attention, to the presence of that Majesty in Whose sight we are always standing; we do not sufficiently consider the constant protection afforded us by our Divine Defender, nor the manifold gifts of His munificence. Thus, we show ourselves to have but little gratitude for the grace, rather for the multiplied graces, with which He forestalls and supports us. At one time, by His own direct action, He fills our souls with heavenly illumination; at another

He visits us by His angels; now He employs our fellow-men to instruct us; and now He consoles and enlightens us by means of the Sacred Scriptures. "For what things soever were written, were written for our learning; that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope." Well does the Apostle say, "for our learning, that through patience we might have hope," because, as we read in Proverbs, "The learning of a man is known by patience." And St. Paul himself tells us in another place that "patience (worketh) trial, and trial hope." How is it that we alone are wanting to ourselves? How is it that we alone neglect ourselves? Perhaps the reason why we are so careless with regard to our own interests is because we behold assistance coming to us freely from all sides? But this is the very reason which should make us the more zealous and vigilant. For undoubtedly there would not be so much solicitude regarding us in heaven and on earth, unless our necessities seemed to be correspondingly great; and unless we were surrounded by numerous enemies, we should not have about us such manifold protection.

How happy, therefore, are those amongst us who have already, in a manner, been delivered from the "snare of the hunters," and have gone forth from the tabernacles of war-time into the dwellings of peace, secure now from all danger of evil, and "singularly settled in hope"! It is to one of these, rather I should say, it is to the whole assembly of these that the words are addressed, "There shall no evil come to thee; nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." Remember, my brethren, that this promise is made, not to such as live according to the flesh, but to those who, although

living in the flesh, yet walk according to the spirit. For with respect to the carnal man, there is no distinction between himself and his tabernacle. All things are confounded in him, because he is a son of Babylon.* Such a one is entirely flesh, and the Spirit of the Lord cannot rest upon him. But how can evil be wanting there where the good Spirit abideth not? And wheresoever evil is found, there of necessity shall the scourge appear also. For punishment is the inseparable companion of sin. "There shall no evil come to thee; nor shall the scourge come near thy tabernacle." This doubtless is a grand promise. But on what grounds may I hope to see it accomplished in myself? How shall I avoid both the evil and the scourge? Whither shall I flee, to what remote land shall I withdraw so that they may not come nigh me? By what merit, by what wisdom, by what virtue can I hope to escape? Listen, brethren: "For he hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." In all which ways? In all the ways by which thou declinest from evil and by which thou fleest from the wrath to come. There are many ways and also many varieties of ways. Hence the traveller is exposed to much perplexity and peril. How easy it is to take the wrong road where many roads diverge, especially when one is not acquainted with the landmarks! And observe that God hath not given His angels charge over us to keep us in *all ways* without distinction, but only in all *our* ways. For there are other ways *from* which, rather than *in* which, we have need to be guarded.

Therefore, brethren, "let us search our ways," as the Prophet Jeremias counsels. Let us also examine

* "Babylon" signifies "confusion."—(Translator.)

the ways of the demons, the ways of the holy angels, and the ways of the Lord. But I am conscious that I am undertaking a task which is beyond my capacity. You must, therefore, assist me by your prayers, in order that God may open to me the treasure of His wisdom and "make pleasing to Himself the voluntary offerings of my mouth." Well now to begin. The ways of the children of Adam lie in necessity and cupidity. For we are drawn by both and are driven by both. There is, however, this difference, that we seem to be more driven by necessity and more drawn by cupidity. Besides, necessity, so it seems, should be attributed to the body in particular. Nor is this way of necessity a straight and simple way, but very roundabout, with many twists and turns, and admitting of few short cuts, if any at all. What man is not aware how manifold and multiform are our human necessities? Who shall be able to enumerate them all? Experience is our best instructor in this matter, because, as the Prophet Isaias bears witness, "vexation alone shall give understanding." By this each of us is taught how much need he has to cry to the Lord, not, "Deliver me from my *necessity*," but with the Psalmist, "Deliver me from my *necessities*." Nor is it alone out of the way of necessity we desire to be led, but also out of the way of cupidity, as many of us, I mean, as do not turn a deaf ear to the admonitions of the Wise Man. What does he say? "Turn away from thy own will"; and again, "Go not after thy lusts." Indeed of the two evils, it were better to walk in the way of necessity than in that of cupidity. The former way has been described as manifold; but more manifold still is the latter, yea, it is manifold beyond

all measure. For cupidity appertains to the heart. Therefore its multiplicity exceeds that of necessity in proportion as the soul is greater than the body. Such, my brethren, "are the ways which seem good to men, but the end thereof" is without end, because they lead down into hell's abyss. If we have now discovered the ways of men, let us consider this also, whether it be not of them that the Psalmist sings, "Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways." How can it be questioned that there is unhappiness in the way of cupidity, and not the happiness which men seek in it? For what though some appear to find all the happiness they wish for in the prosperity of this world? The misery of such is only made the more miserable by the eagerness with which they embrace unhappiness for happiness, or rather lose and submerge themselves in unhappiness. And woe to the sons of men by reason of this false and delusive felicity! Woe to him who says in his heart, "I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing," whereas he is "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"! Necessity, as I have remarked, proceeds from the weakness of the flesh, and cupidity from the hunger and forgetfulness of the heart. For therefore does the soul hunger after foreign bread because she has forgotten to eat her own: that is to say, the reason why she covets earthly delights is because she neglects to consider the heavenly.

Let us now examine the ways of the demons. Let us examine them in order that we may avoid them; let us study them with the object of shunning them. For their ways are presumption and obstinacy. Do

you ask me how I can know this? Well, consider him who is the prince of devils, for as he is, so are they of his household. And look at the commencement of Lucifer's ways. Did he not evidently begin his career by an act of most monstrous presumption, saying, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the mountains of the covenant, in the sides of the north . . . I will be like the Most High." Oh, how daring was such presumption, and how horrible! It was this that caused the ruin of both him and his followers. As the Psalmist says, "There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are cast out and could not stand." It was on account of their presumption they could not stand, and because of their obstinacy they cannot now rise again after falling. Presumption has made each of them "a spirit that goeth," and obstinacy "a spirit that returneth no more." Astounding indeed was the demons' presumption, but not less astounding is their obstinacy, because their pride ascendeth always: "Therefore there is no change with them." For by their unwillingness to turn from the way of presumption, they have fallen into the way of obstinacy. Oh, how perverted and corrupted in heart are the sons of men, as many of them as follow in the footsteps of Satan and begin to walk in the ways of the demons! For the one object of the "wrestling" of the "spirits of wickedness" with us is to induce us to enter their ways, so that they may lead us along in them, and bring us at last to the doom prepared for themselves. Therefore, flee, O man, flee from presumption and obstinacy, lest they should "make thee a joy to thy enemies." For these are the vices in which thy enemies long particularly to behold thee entangled, having

experienced in themselves how difficult it is to escape out of such a whirlpool.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, my brethren, of the manner in which we may descend into, or perhaps I should say, fall into these ways of the demons. As it appears to me, the first step in this descent consists in shutting one's eyes to one's own weakness, to one's own wickedness, to one's own worthlessness. For then one begins to spare oneself, to flatter oneself, and to form a high esteem of oneself, forgetting the words of St. Paul, that, "if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The second downward step is ignorance of oneself. For when in the first step, imitating our first parents, we have by our dissimulation "sewed together fig-leaves (so to speak) and made ourselves aprons" of concealment, what wonder is it that we cannot now see our wounds, especially as the sole reason for covering them was to prevent their being seen? * After this, we go so far as to deny our wounds whenever they happen to be revealed by another, inclining our "hearts to evil words, to make excuses in sins." We have now taken the third step, which has carried us very near, yea, to the very borders of presumption. For what evil shall he be

* Cf. Genesis iii. 7. The Saint uses similar language in *De Consideratione*, lib. ii. c. ix., where he says, addressing Pope Eugenius III: "And not only oughtest thou to consider *what* thou wert born, but also *in what manner* thou didst enter the world. Otherwise thou shalt lose the profit and fruit of thy meditation. Take off, then, those hereditary aprons (*perizomata*) which have been cursed by God from the beginning. Tear away that covering of sewed fig-leaves, which hides thy shame but heals not thy wounds." By the aprons and covering he means, of course, dissimulation; and it is described as hereditary, as having been practised by Adam and Eve.—(Translator.)

afraid to commit, who even dares to excuse his sins? But he will find it difficult to maintain himself here on this slippery incline and surrounded with darkness, especially as there shall not be wanting an evil angel of the Lord to push and pursue him.* Consequently he takes the fourth step, or rather he plunges down the fourth precipice, which is contempt. For as we read in Proverbs, "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth." Then and thenceforward "the pit shutteth her mouth upon him" ever more and more, contempt delivering him over to impenitence, whilst impenitence fixes his will in unchangeable obstinacy. Here at last is the sin which "shall not be forgiven him neither in this world nor in the world to come"; because the heart that is thus rendered hard and obdurate "neither feareth God nor regardeth man." Now, he who so cleaves to the devil in all his ways, has evidently become one spirit with him. It is with reference to the ways of men (which have been already pointed out to you) that the Apostle says, in warning his disciples, "Let no temptation take hold on you, but *such as is human.*" For it is proper to man to sin. But who does not know that the ways of the demons are entirely foreign to the nature of man? Although perhaps there are some men who from the habit of walking in the demon's ways have put on the demon's nature. Nevertheless, whatever

* "Let their way become dark and slippery; and let the angel of the Lord pursue them" (Ps. xxxiv. 6). We have here a most terrifying picture of our spiritual situation: walking on ice in the dark, with enemies pursuing and pushing us. How can we hope to escape a fall? "And when they heard this, the disciples wondered very much, saying: Who then can be saved? And Jesus beholding, said to them: With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible" (Matthew xix. 25-56).—(Translator.)

may be thought of particular men, it is the property, not of man, but of the devil, to persevere in sin.

We have next to inquire what are the ways of the holy angels. Doubtless they are those which the Only-Begotten Himself hath revealed, where He says, "You shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Therefore the ways of the angels are ascents and descents. They ascend for their own sakes; they descend or rather condescend to us and for us. For these blessed spirits mount up to God in blissful contemplation, and out of compassion for us they come down to our lowliness to keep us in all our ways. They ascend to rejoice in God's presence; they descend to execute His will, "for He hath given His angels charge over thee." Nevertheless, not even when they descend to us are they deprived of the vision of glory, because they "always see the Face of the Father."

I suppose you want to hear something now concerning the ways of the Lord? Well, if I undertook to show you them, I should consider myself to be very presumptuous. It is written of Him, however, that "He will teach us of His ways" Himself. For how could we have confidence in any other teacher? Yea, He has already taught us His ways, since He has opened the lips of the Psalmist and inspired him to say, "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." It is by these ways, my brethren, that He comes to all souls in general and to each in particular, viz., by the ways of mercy and truth. For we cannot suppose that God has yet come to him, who, whilst presuming much on His mercy, seems to have forgotten His justice or truth. But neither is He found in the heart which is filled

with terror by the remembrance of His truth, without deriving any consolation from the thought of His mercy. *He* cannot be said to hold the truth, who fails to recognise mercy where it truly exists : on the other hand mercy, to be true, must be accompanied by truth, that is to say, by justice. Accordingly, where (as the Psalmist sings) " Mercy and truth have met each other, (there) justice and peace have kissed." Nor can the Lord Himself be far away since " His place is in peace." Oh, my brethren, " what great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us " concerning this happy union of mercy and truth ! " Thy mercy and Thy truth have always upheld me," exclaims the Royal Prophet ; and in another place, " Thy mercy is before my eyes, and I am well pleased with Thy truth." And regarding the same Prophet the Lord made this promise, " My truth and My mercy shall be with him."

But let us consider also the visible and manifest comings of the Lord. By that which has already been accomplished, have we not received the Saviour in mercy ? And by that which is yet to be, which is promised at the end of the world, do we not expect One Who shall judge us in truth ? Perhaps it was this which inspired the Psalmist to sing, " God loveth mercy and truth ; the Lord will give grace and glory." Yet even at His first coming, He was mindful not only of His mercy, but also of His truth " to the house of Israel " ; and at His second, not only shall He " judge the world with justice and the people with His truth," but even then His justice shall be accompanied by mercy, except in the case of those who shall not have done mercy. For these are the ways of His eternity, whereof you may read in the Prophet Habacuc, " The

hills of the world are bent down from the ways of His eternity ; " * and this can be easily proved by Scriptural testimonies which I have in mind. Thus, it is written in the Psalms, " The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity " ; and also, " The truth of the Lord remaineth for ever." It is from these two ways that " the hills of the world have bent themselves down," which hills symbolise the proud demons, the princes of this world, the rulers of this darkness, who have not known the ways of truth and mercy, but are utterly unmindful of their paths. What can there be in common between truth and him who, according to the clear testimony of the Saviour, " is a liar and the father thereof " and " stood not in the truth " ? And with regard to mercy, the very misery he has inflicted upon us sufficiently proves how little he possesses of that. When indeed was he ever merciful, who " was a murderer from the beginning " ? For " he that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good ? " And who could be more evil to himself than he who never repents of his own iniquity, is never brought to compunction even by his own sufferings ? It was a false presumption that forced him originally from the way of truth, and now it is a cruel obstinacy that keeps the way of mercy closed against him. Hence it is that he can never either find mercy in himself or obtain mercy from the Lord. In this manner, therefore, have all those swelling hills been " bent down from the ways of His eternity," inasmuch as they have descended by

* " Incurvati sunt colles mundi ab itineribus aeternitatis Ejus " (Hab. iii. 6), which the Douay Translators have rendered, " The hills of the world are bowed down by the journeys of His eternity." This, however, does not suit the present context. —(Translator.)

their own tortuous and winding ways, or rather by their precipitous plunges, from ways of the Lord which are straight and right. But how much more prudently and profitably have not other spiritual hills been bowed and humbled unto salvation by these same ways of His eternity! For they have not, like the former, been bent *from* these ways, so as to diverge from their straightness: but the ways of God's eternity have bowed and conformed them to their own rectitude. Do we not even now behold the hills of the world bending down, whilst the high and the mighty prostrate before the Lord with devoted humility and do homage at His feet? Do they not bend, when from the perilous heights of their pride and cruelty they stoop to the lowly ways of mercy and truth?

According to these ways of the Lord's eternity are directed not only the ways of the holy angels but also the ways of the elect amongst men. And in truth the first forward step to be taken by the man who has just emerged from the slough of vice is to show mercy, to have compassion on the only son of his mother, to please God by having pity on his own soul, as the Wise Man counsels. He who acts in this way, imitates his Redeemer in the great work of divine compassion, not sparing himself, but crucifying himself with Him Who was first crucified for us, and in a manner dying like Him for his own salvation. This salutary self-pity is the first feeling awakened in his mind after he has returned to himself, and it dwells and operates in the very centre of his soul. It now remains for him to proceed along the royal road of penance and to advance therein until he reaches truth. But, as I have often reminded you, brethren, compunction of the heart

ought not to be separated from confession of the lips. "For with the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." He that is truly converted in heart will of necessity be little in his own eyes. For Truth has said, "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Such a one, therefore, must not desire to conceal what he cannot but know, namely, how completely he has been "brought to nothing." Let him not be ashamed to expose to the light of truth that which he beholds (not without an affection of commendable self-compassion) in the secret recesses of his heart. Thus, my brethren, does man enter upon the ways of mercy and truth, the ways of the Lord, the ways of life. And the fruit of these ways is the salvation of the wayfarer.

It is manifest that the ways of the blessed spirits also are directed to the ways of the Lord. For when they ascend by divine contemplation, they gaze upon the subsisting Truth, Which they satiate their desires with, yet still desire though satiated; and when they descend, they exercise mercy in our regard, by keeping us in all our ways. As the Apostle says, they "are all ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation." They are our ministers, therefore, not the Lord's. And in this they are but imitating the example of the Only-Begotten, Who did "not come to be ministered unto but to minister," Who stood amongst His disciples, not as their Lord, but as their servant. The fruit of the ways of the angels, as regards themselves, is their own beatitude and the sweet obedience of charity; as regards us, it is, on the one hand, the communication of heavenly

graces, and on the other, the keeping of our ways. "For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways," that is to say, in all thy necessities and in all thy desires. Otherwise it would be very easy for thee to fall into the ways of death, because from necessity thou mightest proceed to obstinacy, or from cupidity to presumption. And these, viz., obstinacy and presumption, are not the ways of men, but of demons. For in what are men accustomed to grow obstinate so easily as in that which they look upon, or pretend to look upon, as belonging to necessity? It is to this fact the poet was referring when he sang:

"'Admonish as thou please,' he makes reply.
'All that is possible to me have I
The power to do, but nothing more; and thou,
If in my place, wouldst say what I say now.'" *

And what is it that impels us to presumption, but the violence of a passionate desire?

In the meantime, therefore, God "hath given His angels charge over thee," not to withdraw thee from thy ways, but rather to keep thee in them, and by their own ways to direct thy ways into His ways. Dost thou inquire, in what manner? By bringing it to pass that what they themselves do from the pure and sole motive of charity, thou shalt do at least by the persuasion and compulsion of thine own necessity: that thou also shalt feel constrained to descend,

* "Quidquid moneas, ait ille, ego quod possum, possum, et non
Ultra possum. Tu si hic es, aliter sentias?"
—Terence, *Andr.*, a. 2, s. 1.

or better, to condescend, by treating thy neighbour with compassion ; and again, with the angels, lifting thyself aloft on the wings of holy desires, shalt endeavour with all the force of thy affection to attain to the sovereign and everlasting Truth. Hence the Prophet Jeremias admonishes us, saying, " Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens." Hence in the Mass also it is said to us daily, " Lift up your hearts." And hence the Psalmist reproves us for our negligence with the words, " O ye sons of men, how long will you be heavy of heart ? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying ? " He says " heavy of heart," because when the heart is burdened and oppressed it cannot be so easily raised up to seek and to love the truth. And be not surprised that the holy angels do not disdain to admit us with themselves, yea, and to draw us into the ways of the Lord, since they even condescend to keep us in our own. But how much more securely do they walk in these ways, and how much more happily ! Nevertheless even their way of walking in mercy and truth is infinitely inferior to His Who is Himself Mercy and Truth.

How wisely has God disposed these various orders, putting each in the place most suitable for it ! He stands Himself at the apex of the universe, because He is supreme, having nothing above Him, nor anything beyond. His angels He has placed, not indeed on the summit, but still in security : they dwell in the neighbourhood of Him Who is the Highest, and are therefore " endued with virtue from above." The place assigned to man is neither on the summit, nor in security, but rather in uncertainty. Having the solid earth under his feet, he occupies a very low place

indeed, yet not the very lowest, so that he has both the power and the necessity to walk with caution. The demons, finally, live at large in this hanging mass of windy, wandering air. For they are unworthy to ascend to heaven, and too proud to descend to earth. I have now said enough for to-day. And would to God we were able by His grace to return sufficient thanks to Him from Whom is all our sufficiency! For we are not "sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but all our sufficiency is from" Him, "Who giveth to all men abundantly," and Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

TWELFTH SERMON ON THE PSALM XC.

On God's Goodness to us, and on the Respect, Love, Gratitude and Confidence due to our Guardian Angels.

" For He hath given His angels charge over thee : to keep thee in all thy ways."

In yesterday's sermon, as you will remember, I told you that the ways of the demons are presumption and obstinacy ; and I gave you my reasons for saying so. But there is another point of view from which, if you judge it necessary, their ways may be examined. For although they endeavour by every means to hide them, the Holy Spirit constantly frustrates their efforts, and in several passages of the Scriptures points out to us clearly the paths of the wicked. Thus of all the demons it is written, " The wicked walk round about." And of their leader in particular, we read, " The devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." He was once even compelled to acknowledge this himself, in the presence of the Divine Majesty. For so it is written in Job : " Now on a certain day when the sons of God came to stand before the Lord, Satan also was present amongst them. And the Lord said to him : whence comest thou ? And he answered and said : I have *gone round* about the earth, and walked through it." Let us say, therefore, that the ways of Satan are gyrations and circumventions. The latter of these he uses with us ; the former he practises in himself. For he is always lifting himself up, and is always flung

down again: his pride is ever soaring aloft, and ever humbled even to the ground. What is this but going round in a circle? And he who thus walks round about, moves indeed, but never advances. Woe to the man that imitates this gyration by refusing to renounce his own will! Should I attempt to draw him away from it, he appears to follow me for a little, but in manifest pain. He is evidently moving in a circle. He is beginning already to return—but by another road—to the point whence he started, namely, to self-will, from which he refuses to be completely detached. He struggles to break loose on this side and on that, he endeavours to escape, now by one way, now by another, but is always held fast by the peg of self-will.

But, my brethren, if it is an evil thing to be gyrating oneself in this manner, it is much worse to be the circumventor of another. In truth, it is this particularly which makes the devil to be a devil. Yet you may ask how can that proudest of creatures descend from the loftiness of his pride in order to circumvent miserable mortals? But observe even here how the wicked one walks round about. "He beholdeth every high thing," as holy Job says, yet he also carefully considers what is lowest, but only that he may be lifted up the more, that he may be the more inflated. For he seems to himself to have mounted higher when he has placed the humble under his feet. Hence we read in the psalm, "Whilst the wicked one acts proudly, the poor is set on fire."* How perversely do the evil angels thus imitate the good in ascending and descending! *They*

* "Dum superbit impius, incenditur pauper," ps. ix, 2. St. Bernard takes this to mean that it is a source of pride to the devil to have succeeded in kindling in our souls the fire of the passions.—(Translator.)

ascend from the love of vainglory, and descend through the malice of jealousy. As their descent is a cruelty, so their ascent is a lie. For, as I told you yesterday, the demons are strangers to mercy and truth. But if the malignant angels come down for the purpose of circumventing us, let us give thanks to Him by Whose command the good angels also descend to assist us and to keep us in all our ways. Nor is that enough. For "in their hands they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Oh, how much instruction, and admonition, and consolation is given us, dearest brethren, in the different verses of this psalm! Is there another psalm in the entire psalter which so admirably consoles the faint-hearted, admonishes the remiss, instructs the ignorant? Therefore it is that divine providence has brought it to pass that the words of this should be very frequently on the lips of the faithful, especially during the holy season of Lent. And the Church seems to have caught the suggestion to make so much use of the same psalm in her times of fasting, from the use which the devil made of it to tempt the Lord after His long fast in the desert. Thus, in this matter also, that most wicked servant has unwillingly and unwittingly benefited the children of God. For what can grieve him more, or what can rejoice us more, than the fact that even his malice is made to co-operate unto good for us? "He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways." "Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to Him, and His wonderful works to the children of men." Let them confess and "say among the gentiles: The Lord hath done great things for us: we are become joyful." "O Lord, what is man that

Thou art made known to him ? or the son of man that Thou makest account of him ? " " Or why dost Thou set Thy Heart upon him ? " For in truth, Thou dost set Thy Heart upon us and " hast care of us," and art ever " solicitous for us." Thou hast sent us Thine only-begotten Son, Thou hast given us Thy Holy Spirit, Thou hast promised us the vision of Thy Face. And lest there should be any one at all in the kingdom of heaven unoccupied in the care of us, Thou hast appointed the blessed angels " to minister for us," Thou hast charged them with our keeping, and ordered them to act as our guides. It is not enough that Thou " makest (these) spirits Thy angels," * but Thou must also make them the angels of Thy little ones. For the Lord has said, " Their (the little ones') angels in heaven always see the Face of My Father Who is in heaven." So Thou hast made these blissful spirits Thy messengers to us and also our messengers to Thee.

" He hath given His angels charge over thee." † Oh, marvellous condescension ! Oh, truly divine affection of charity ! For Who is He that hath given charge ? And

* " Qui facis angelos tuos spiritus " (Ps. ciii. 5). St. Bernard, after SS. Augustine and Gregory the Great, interprets this verse in such a manner as to make " angelos tuos " a predicate, so that the meaning will be : " Who employest the heavenly spirits as Thy angels or messengers." St. Paul appears to understand it in the same sense (Heb. i.) But according to Theodoret and St. Thomas (In c. i. ad Heb.) the predicate is " spiritus," and the sense, consequently : " Who makest Thy angels (messengers) as swift as spirits," that is to say, as the winds, of which there is mention in the preceding verse of Psalm ciii., " Who walkest upon the wings of the winds." This latter interpretation is more in accord with the Greek text : " *ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα.*" The article marks *ἀγγέλους* as the subject. —(Translator.)

† This and the following paragraphs are read in both the Roman and Cistercian Breviaries as the lessons for the second nocturn of the feast of the Guardian Angels, October 2nd.—(Translator.)

to whom hath the charge been given ? And concerning whom ? Brethren, let us diligently study and carefully commit to memory the words of this most consoling charge. Who is He That hath given charge ? Whose are the angels ? Whose commands do they obey ? To Whose will are they submissive ? Attend to the Psalmist : " He (the Almighty) hath given His angels charge over thee : to keep thee in all thy ways." Nor do the angels show any reluctance to execute the order, since they even " bear thee up in their hands." The Divine Majesty, therefore, has given charge to angels, has given charge to His own angels, namely, to those sublime and blissful spirits, who dwell so near Himself, who are so intimately united to Him, and are truly the " domestics of God." And He has given them charge over thee. Who art thou ? Lord, " what is man that Thou art mindful of him ? or the son of man that Thou visitest him ? " As if indeed man were not rottenness, and the son of man but a worm ! But what, thinkest thou, is the charge He has given concerning thee ? Perhaps, as holy Job feared, He has " written bitter things against (thee) and will consume (thee) for the sins of (thy) youth " ? Perhaps He has charged His angels " against a leaf that is carried away with the wind " to " show their power, and to pursue a dry straw " ? Perhaps He has charged them to " take away the impious one that he may not see the glory of God " ? No, that charge has not been given yet, but the day will come when it shall be given. And lest it be given against thee, take good care never to depart from " the aid of the Most High " and always to " dwell under the protection of the God of heaven." For that terrible charge shall be given,

not against, but in behalf of those whom the God of heaven protects. And if it is not given now, it is for their sake it is deferred, because "all things are for the sake of the elect." For when the servants were preparing to go out with the intention of plucking up at once the cockle sown amidst the wheat, "the good man of the house coming said to them: suffer both to grow until the harvest, lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it." But how shall the wheat be preserved until the harvest time? This, my brethren, is the task here enjoined the angels: this is the work they are busy with now.

And so, "He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee." O Word incarnate! O Wheat amongst the cockle! O Grain amidst the chaff! O "Lily amongst the thorns"! Let us return thanks to Him, my brethren, let us give thanks to Him both for you and for me. For He has entrusted you to my care as a most precious deposit, the fruit of His cross, and the price of His Blood. But He is not content with such poor protection for you, so unsafe, so useless, so weak, so inadequate; and He therefore proclaims by His Prophet, "Over thy wall, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen." For they who appear to be the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem, or the towers of the walls, require themselves, and indeed more than others, the vigilance of these watchmen.

"He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways." O my brother, with how much reverence, with how much gratitude, with how much confidence ought not these words to inspire thee!

With how much reverence for a presence so august! With how much gratitude for benevolence so great! With how much confidence in a keeping so secure! Walk therefore with caution, remembering that the angels of God accompany thee in all thy ways, as the Lord has commanded them. In every place, whether public or private, show respect for thy angel. Surely thou wouldst not dare to do in his presence what thou wouldst fear to do in mine. But perhaps thou dost doubt the presence of him whom thou canst not see? What if thou wert to hear him? or to touch him? or to scent him? Understand, therefore, that it is not by sight alone that we can have certainty of the presence of objects. For not even all things belonging to the material order are perceptible to sight. Much less, then, can it perceive purely spiritual objects, which lie beyond the range of every corporeal faculty and require to be "spiritually examined." But if thou wilt consult thy faith, it shall give thee evidence of the presence of the angels. I have said advisedly, "thy faith shall give thee evidence," because the Apostle himself defines faith to be "the evidence (*argumentum*) of things that appear not." The angels are present, therefore, and they are present to thee: not only are they with thee, but they are with thee to defend thee. Yes, my brother, the angels of God stand nigh to assist and to protect thee. "What (shalt thou) render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to (thee)?" For to Him alone is due all the honour and glory. Why do I say, "to Him alone"? Because it is He Who "hath given charge." And "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

Nevertheless, although it is the Lord Who "hath given His angels charge over thee," we must also show ourselves grateful to these celestial spirits, who obey the divine injunction with so much charity, and assist us in our so great necessity. Let us, therefore, make a return of gratitude, yea, and of affection to such glorious guardians. Let us give them love for love. Let us honour them as much as we are bound to, as much as we can. Yet all our reverence and all our love must be directed ultimately to Him from Whom both angels and men derive their whole capacity for honouring and loving, and their whole claim to be honoured and loved. But we ought not to interpret the Apostle's words, "To God alone be honour and glory"* in such a manner as to make him contradict what the Psalmist says, "But to me Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable." In my opinion, this passage of St. Paul ought to be understood in the same sense as what he writes in another place, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." For surely he does not here counsel the faithful to refuse to acknowledge their other obligations. Especially as he has told them in the very last preceding verse to "render to all men their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." Therefore, in order that you may understand more fully what he intends to teach or counsel in both these passages, take an illustration from the lights of the firmament. Consider how when the sun is shining the lesser luminaries

* "Soli Deo honor et gloria" (1 Tim. i. 17). The English Version has, "To the only God be honour and glory," which manifestly does not accord with St. Bernard's context.—(Translator.)

are nowhere to be seen. Do you suppose they have been removed from the sky? Or that they have been extinguished? No, my brethren, that is not the reason. They are still in their places, but are so covered and surrounded by the more brilliant radiance of the sun that they are no longer visible to our eyes. In the same way, the law of love ought to overcome all other obligations and reign alone in our hearts, appropriating to itself whatever is due to other laws, so that we may do all things solely from love. Thus also the honour due to God must prevail over and in a sense exclude the honour claimed by others, so that He alone is not only honoured more than any other, but is honoured in all others. And this is equally true with respect to the charity we should have for God, as compared with that which we owe to His creatures. For when we have given the Lord our God the love of our whole heart, and of our whole soul, of our whole mind, and of our whole strength, what love is there left to give others? Consequently, let us in Him love His angels, and love them tenderly, since we are destined as "joint-heirs" with them to share in their glory. For now indeed we are the sons of God, but "it hath not yet appeared what we shall be," because we are still as children "under tutors and governors, until the time appointed by the Father"; and seem in the meanwhile to "differ nothing from servants."

Yet, my brethren, although we are but little ones, and although there is still a long road before us, aye, and a road beset with dangers innumerable, why should we be afraid under the protection of such powerful guardians? They who keep us in all our ways cannot be conquered by any hostile force; and they can

neither be led astray themselves nor lead us astray. They are faithful, they are prudent, they are invincible: wherefore, then, should we fear? Only let us follow them, only let us cling to them, and we shall "dwell in the aid of the Most High" and "abide under the protection of the God of heaven." And consider how necessary for thee is this protection, this keeping of thee in all thy ways. "In their hands," sings the Psalmist, "they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Does it seem to thee a matter of small account that there is "a stone of stumbling in the way"? Attend to the words which follow: "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk; and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon." Oh, how needful is a guide, or rather a carrier, especially for a little one entering upon this danger-strewn road! "In their hands they shall bear thee up." They will keep thee in all thy own ways, and will conduct thee wherever, as a child, thou art able to walk. But they will not suffer thee to be tempted beyond what thou canst endure; and when the "stone of stumbling" appears in the way they will take thee up in their arms, and lift thee over. Oh, how easily does *he* surmount obstacles who is borne in the hands of the holy angels! How easy one finds it to swim, when (according to the vulgar saying) another holds one's head over water!

Therefore, my brethren, I say to each one of you: as often as thou feelest the pressure of violent temptation, as often as bitter tribulation threatens to engulf thee: invoke thy guardian, call upon thy guide, cry to thy "helper in due times in tribulation." Call out to him and say, "Lord, save me, I perish." "He

neither slumbereth nor sleepeth that keepeth " thee (although he sometimes hides himself from thee for a space) lest perchance thou, not knowing that he is supporting thee, should to thy great peril throw thyself out of his arms. These arms of his are to be understood spiritually. They are, in fact, spiritual succours, which are variously and invisibly ministered to each of the elect according to the measure of the particular difficulty or danger to be encountered, or, as it were, according to the magnitude of the " stone of stumbling " ; and they are ministered by angels appointed to that office. I shall now make mention of some of those trials which I regard as the more common, and of which, I am sure, most of you have had experience. Suppose you see a person under violent temptation. He is severely tried either by bodily infirmity, or by temporal misfortune ; or is assailed by spiritual sadness, or suffering from a fainting of soul. Already he is beginning to be tempted above what he can bear ; already he has reached the " stone of stumbling" ; and he shall certainly dash his foot against it, unless someone comes to help him. But, my brethren, what is that stone ? I take it to be none other than that " Stone of stumbling," that Rock of scandal, upon Which " whosoever shall fall he shall be broken, but on whomsoever It shall fall, It shall grind him to powder " ; the " chief Corner-Stone, elect, precious," that is to say, our Lord Jesus Christ. To fall upon this Stone is to murmur against Him, to be scandalised because of " pusillanimity of spirit and the storm." And so he who is now on the point of falling, who is ready to dash his foot against the Stone, has urgent need of angelic consolation, and of angelic hands to

bear him up. It is evidently true that the murmurer or the blasphemer falls upon the Stone of stumbling, and that he hurts only himself, not also Him against Whom he so blindly dashes his foot.

It appears to me that persons subject to such temptations are oftentimes upheld by the spiritual hands of angels, in so powerful a manner that they pass over, almost unconsciously, the obstacles which had occasioned them the utmost alarm. And afterwards they feel as much surprised at the facility they have experienced as they had previously felt dismayed at the difficulty which they anticipated. Now do you wish me to tell you what is meant in particular (in my opinion) by the two hands of the angels? It seems to me that they signify a twofold admonition: we are borne up in angelic hands whenever we are reminded of the shortness of our present tribulation, and of the eternity of the future reward: I should rather have said, whenever these truths are so engraved and imprinted on our hearts that we perceive in a most intimate and lively way how "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Now who can question that these inspirations are the work of the good angels, since it is certain that evil suggestions come from the bad angels? Dearest brethren, make the angels of God your familiar friends; frequent their society by constant remembrance and fervent prayer; for they are always nigh to you with comfort and protection.

THIRTEENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the four Vices of Obstinacy, Envy, Anger, and Pusillanimity.

"In their hands they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy feet against a stone. Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon."

"In their hands they shall bear thee up; lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." It seems to me, my brethren, that these words (which, as you will remember, were discussed in yesterday's sermon also) may be understood not only of present consolation, but of future comfort as well. I mean to say that the holy angels who during life keep us in all our ways, will bear us up in their hands when life's journey is ended. To this there are not wanting trustworthy witnesses. It is not long since you heard it read to you of our holy father St. Benedict (blessed in everything else as well as in name) how that, whilst his gaze appeared to be riveted on the splendour of some dazzling light, he beheld the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua, being borne to heaven by angels in the form of a fiery globe. But wherefore do I offer you human testimony? For Truth Itself tells us in the Gospel concerning the poor ulcerous mendicant that "he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." How indeed could we walk without their assistance in ways so new to us, and in a land so entirely unknown, especially since there is a "stone of stumbling" in our path? What is this stone? The stone here is the wicked one who

was wont in times past to be worshipped in stones, and who offered stones to the Lord, saying, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Moreover, thy foot is thy affection*: her affection is the foot of thy soul which the angels bear up in their hands lest she should dash it against the stone. Oh, how could any soul be otherwise than extremely alarmed if she had to make alone that last long journey, if she had to enter upon those perilous paths without consolation, if she had to walk with her own feet along that stone-bestrewn way!

But I will offer thee yet stronger proof of the need thou hast to be borne in other hands, and in none other than those of the angels. "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon." How should the human foot fare amongst such stones? What affection of the soul could pass without hurt through the midst of such horrible monsters; which are nothing else than the "spirits of wickedness," here designated by most appropriate symbolic names? For it is of them the Psalmist has told thee what I do not believe thou hast forgotten, namely, that "a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand." But perhaps we may suppose that the powers of hell have so divided amongst them the works of malice, the functions of iniquity, that, deriving their names from their particular offices, they are called—one an asp, another a basilisk, a third a lion, and a fourth a dragon: In other words, they are named asps, or basilisks, or lions, or dragons, according to their special

* "Pes tuus affectio tua." St. Augustine (In Ps. xciv.) has: "Pedes nostri in hoc itinere affectus; quasi duo pedes amor et timor."—(Translator.)

invisible manner of injuring souls, whether by their bite, or by their glance, or by their roar and violence, or even by their breath. I remember to have read in the Gospel of a certain kind of evil spirit that it "is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." The words of apostolic reproof had no power to dislodge it. Have we not here the asp which the Psalmist represents as deaf, where he says, "Like a deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, which will not hear the voice of the charmer"? Dost thou desire to be delivered from the fear of so terrible a monster? Dost thou desire to be able after death to walk upon this formidable asp? If so, be careful not to walk *after* him in life. Take care not to imitate him now and he shall have no power to frighten thee hereafter.

There is one vice, my brethren, over which, as it seems to me, this kind of devil has full dominion. And if you wish to know what it is, it is that spiritual circuitousness, against which I warned you in yesterday's discourse: it is that obstinacy which I admonished you to beware of in the sermon last preceding. For I never weary of warning you (whenever the opportunity offers) to avoid with all diligence so deadly a pest. Indeed this vice is the subversion of all religion; and according to the testimony of the Hebrew Legislator, "the venom of asps is incurable." It is said to be the custom of the asp to press one of his ears as strongly as he can against the ground, and to stop the other with the end of his tail, so as to prevent himself from hearing. How then can he be influenced by the voice of the charmer, by the voice of the preacher? I can only pray for him; I can only humble my soul in penance for him; I can only baptise myself for his

dead soul in an abundant flood of compassionate tears: for I see that such a one is spiritually dead, and that no wisdom of human charmer, no labour of human admonisher can overcome his insensibility. However, let the obstinate soul remember that it is not in heaven but in the earth the asp is wont to hide his head. For the wisdom which is from above is, according to St. James, not only "modest," but also "peaceable," that is to say, docile; whilst the stubborn wisdom of the asp cannot but be "of the earth, earthly." But the pressing of his ear to the earth would not be enough to cause complete deafness, unless his tail were also employed to stop his hearing. Now what does this tail signify? It signifies the evil end which the soul proposes to herself in her intentions. This it is which makes her deafness desperate. For now she is on the one hand bowed to the earth by her attachment to her own will, and on the other hand, by bending back her tail (if I may so speak), she assiduously contemplates and holds steadily before her mind the evil object which she wishes to obtain. Do not, my brethren, do not, I beg of you, ever stop the ear of your conscience, ever harden your hearts. For the reason why the mouth of the obstinate man is always full of sharp and bitter words is this, because no benevolent admonition can penetrate to his soul. Hence the poison of the asp is always felt in the sting of his tongue, because he has hardened himself with so much diligence against the tongue of the charmer.

The basilisk is the most baneful and abominable of all irrational creatures. It is said to carry its venom in its eye. Do you wish to know what this venomous eye, this evil eye, this fascinating eye, signifies

spiritually? Believe me, it is the vice of envy. For what is it to be envious but to look with an evil eye? Were the devil that seduced our first parents not a basilisk, death would never have entered the world by his envy. Alas for miserable man, that he does not take due precautions against this envious one! My brethren, let us overcome this vice whilst we are still in the body, if we wish to have no fear after death of a demon of such monstrous iniquity. Let no one look with an envious eye upon his brother's spiritual prosperity. For by doing so he infects it with his poison, so to speak, and in a manner kills it—as far as it depends upon him. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," according to the testimony of Truth. And what of him who hates the spiritual good of his brother? Does he not likewise deserve to be called a murderer? In the former case, thy brother still lives, yet thou art guilty of his death; in the latter the fire of charity, which the Lord Jesus came to cast upon the earth, still burns in the breast of thy brother, and nevertheless thou art already condemned as having by thy envy extinguished the flame.

But woe to us because of the dragon! For the dragon is a monster of prodigious size, which kills whatever it touches with its fiery breath, as well the birds of heaven as the beasts of the earth. In my opinion, by this dragon is to be understood the spirit of anger. How many, even of those who appeared to be living a life of exalted virtue, have we not lamented to see miserably blasted by the dragon's breath and falling shamefully into his mouth! How much better had it been for them to have been angry with themselves, as the Psalmist counsels, so that they might not sin!

The human passion of anger is a good natural affection: but the abuse of the gifts of nature brings heavy loss and lamentable ruin. Therefore, my brethren, let us exercise this passion in its legitimate sphere, lest otherwise it should begin to occupy itself with things illicit or unprofitable. It is thus that one love is wont to destroy another; and thus one fear is accustomed to be expelled by another. "Be not afraid of them who kill the body," says the Lord, "and after that have no more than they can do." And He added immediately, "But I will shew you Whom you shall fear: fear Him Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him." That is to say, we are to fear God in order to be delivered from the fear of man: we are to be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, and then there shall be no room in us for any other fear. And I counsel you, my dearest brethren, yet not I but the Lord, not I but Truth: be not angry with them who take from you transitory goods, or who heap insult upon you, or who even perchance inflict upon you physical suffering, "and after that have no more that they can do." But I will show you what you ought to be angry with. Be angry with that which alone has power to hurt you, which alone can prevent all temporal evils from benefiting rather than injuring you. Shall I tell you what it is? It is your own personal iniquity. "Yea, I say to you," be angry with that. For no adversity shall have power to harm you if no iniquity reigns in you.* He who is angry as he ought to be, with this evil, shall

* "Nulla nocebit adversitas, si nulla dominetur iniquitas" —from the Collect of Vespers of the Friday preceding Quadragesima Sunday.—(Translator.)

be found indifferent to all others, or he will even welcome them. "I am ready for stripes," he will say with the Psalmist; "come reverses, come reproaches, come bodily pain: 'I am ready and am not disturbed,' because 'my sorrow (for my sins) is always in my sight.'" Why should we not esteem as nothing all external troubles in comparison with this domestic affliction? Why should we not, each of us, say with King David, "Behold my son who came forth from my bowels persecuteth me, and shall I be angry with an impudent servant?" "My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me": and shall I bewail temporal losses? shall I allow myself to be troubled by bodily discomforts?

It is thus, my brethren, that we acquire not only the spirit of meekness which the dragon's breath cannot injure, but also a magnanimity which the roaring of the lion cannot terrify, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about," says the Apostle Peter. Yes, he can roar, but thanks to the great "Lion of the tribe of Juda," he cannot hurt us. Let him roar as much as he pleases: but let not the flock of Christ flee from him. How he threatens! How he rages! How he strives to overwhelm us with fear! But let us stand firm. Let us not show ourselves such helpless beasts as to be overcome by his mere roaring. We are told by writers who have made a careful study of these matters, that no animal can stand before the roaring of the lion, not even such as will repel his actual onslaught with the greatest courage; he puts to rout by his roaring the enemy that would resist his attack. He, therefore, is truly a beast, truly devoid of reason,

whosoever is so pusillanimous as to succumb to pure fear, who is conquered before the battle by the mere anticipation of labour, who is slain not by the sword but by the trumpet. "You have not yet resisted unto blood," said that strenuous leader, who knew so well how harmless is the roaring of the infernal lion. And another Apostle tells us, "Resist the devil and he will fly from you."

FOURTEENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On God's fourfold Claim to our Gratitude; on the Devil's fourfold Temptation, and on the fourfold Virtue wherewith this must be encountered.

"Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon."

My brethren, let us give thanks to our Creator, to our Benefactor, to our Redeemer, to Him in Whom we have placed all our hope, or I should rather say, to Him Who is Himself all our hope. For He Who is our Redeemer already, is likewise to be our Reward: nor do we now seek from Him any other reward than Himself.* We are ourselves the first gift He has bestowed upon us. For, as the Psalmist sings, "He made us and not we ourselves." Dost thou, O man, esteem it a small favour that He has made thee? But consider what He has made thee: a noble creature, even according to thy material part, yet nobler far in thy soul, which is stamped with the Creator's likeness, endowed with the faculty of reason, and with the capacity for everlasting bliss. Moreover, according to both soul and body, thou hast been made admirable above all other earthly creatures, thy two elements of spirit and flesh being united together in an incomprehensible manner

* We read of St. Thomas that once, whilst praying before a crucifix at Naples, he heard a voice saying to him: "Thou hast written well of Me, Thomas; what reward wilt thou have?" And the holy Doctor made answer: "None other, Lord, than Thyself."—(Translator.)

by the unsearchable wisdom of the Creator. And in proportion to the greatness of man is the greatness of the favour which God has done thee by creating thee. What is more, that favour was entirely gratuitous. Can it be doubted? Before his creation, clearly, man had no merit, since as yet he had no being at all. But perhaps it was expected that after receiving existence he would make an adequate return to his Maker? "I have said to the Lord," sings the Psalmist, "Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods." Therefore there was no expectation that man would render requital to Him Who is absolutely self-sufficing, but he was expected to render humble thanks to Him Who has so many claims to his gratitude. Why should he not return thanks? Were another to restore to thee the light of thy eyes, or the power of hearing, or the sense of smell, or the free control of hand or foot, or the use of reason, by some cause suspended: who would not be violently angry with thee if he found thee at any time either forgetful of the benefit, or ungrateful to the benefactor? But the Lord thy God has given thee not only the use and exercise of thy members and faculties, but the members and faculties themselves, all of which He created for thee out of nothing. Yes, it was He Who made them, Who formed and fashioned them, and appointed its proper function for each. How then does He not deserve by every right and title all the gratitude thou art capable of for benefits so great?

But not content with creating thee, great though that benefit was, He Who caused thee to be when before thou wert not, gave thee also the means of preserving thy existence. And He showed Himself as generous

in this as He was admirable in the work of thy creation. Regarding the first benefit He said, "Let Us make man to Our image and likeness," but with respect to the second, "Let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." He had already announced that the heavenly bodies were created for thy use; for they are represented as having been made in order to be "for signs and for seasons, for days and years." For whose benefit, thinkest thou? Evidently for thine alone; because other creatures either have no need of such things, or have no understanding thereof. How bountiful He has been in this second benefit, how incomparably generous! How liberally He has provided for thy support, for thy instruction, for thy consolation, for thy correction also, if ever thou shouldst need it, yea, and even for thy innocent pleasure! And both these benefits were doubly gratuitous. Why do I say they were doubly gratuitous? Because they neither cost thee any merit to obtain, nor the Lord any labour to bestow. For "He spoke and they were made, He commanded and they were created." But oughtest thou to be the less devoted to Him, the less indebted to Him, the less grateful to Him, for the reason that the benefits obtained cost Him no more to give than they cost thee to acquire? It is one of the characteristics of a perverted heart to seek out occasions of ingratitude. No one acts in this way but he who is disposed to be ungrateful even without occasion or excuse. I suppose thou wilt acknowledge that neither of these two benefits of God is the less useful to thee because it cost thy Benefactor no labour? But if,

perchance, thou shouldst esteem gifts bestowed upon thee the more highly in proportion to the trouble and expense to the donor, thou hast this judgment from thyself, and (as I think) hast learned it from no other teacher than thine own heart. Thou dost not even allow it to be used as a standard by thine own beneficiaries. For thou art more willing to oblige thy brother whenever thou canst do so without inconvenience to thyself. And nevertheless, although the act of kindness has cost thee nothing, thou shouldst be very displeased if that were alleged as an excuse for ingratitude.

But consider now the third benefit of God, I mean the work of thy redemption. With regard to this, at any rate thou hast not even the shadow of an excuse for ingratitude, since it certainly cost thy Benefactor labour. It was indeed a gratuitous favour, yet only free of cost so far as concerned thee, not also on the side of the Redeemer. Thou hast been saved without merit on thy part, but not without suffering on His. Wherefore, then, does thy affection still slumber? Nay, it must be rather dead than slumbering, if it does not respond to a benefit so great, if it does not pour itself out unreservedly in "thanksgiving and the voice of praise." For this third benefit powerfully commends the two preceding, by most evidently proving them to have been the genuine effects of love, which were bestowed without labour on the part of God, not because He was unwilling to bestow them otherwise, but because it was not expedient that He should otherwise bestow them. Therefore the Lord thy God made thee; He made many other creatures for thee; aye, and He even made Himself for thee.

For what says the Evangelist ? " The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." What more remains for Him to do ? One thing more. He has made Himself one flesh with thee : He designs now to make thee one spirit with Himself. O my brother, never allow any of these four favours to leave thy heart, or thy lips, or thy memory, or thy affection. Keep the thought of them ever in thy mind, and the joy of them ever in thy heart. Employ each one of them as a stimulant to spur on thy soul ; make use of them as torches to set thy heart on fire. Thus shalt thou make Him a return of love, Who has proved His love for thee in so many ways. But remember His words to the disciples, " If you love Me, keep My commandments." Therefore, keep the commandments of thy Creator, keep the commandments of thy Benefactor, of thy Redeemer, of thy Rewarder.

The benefits, then, are four : how many are the commandments ? We all know that they are ten in number : now multiply ten by four, the tenfold observance of the law by the fourfold thanksgiving, and thou hast forty, the mystic quadragesimal number. Only be sure now to " stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." Beware of the serpent's craft ; be on thy guard against the enemy's ambush. For he will endeavour to prevent by a fourfold temptation the fourfold thanksgiving thou art required to make. The Lord Jesus Himself was tempted in all these ways, as St. Paul truly testifies, where he says of Him that " He was tempted in all things like as we are, without sin." Perhaps there may be someone who is surprised at this and saying to himself, " I do not remember to have read of any

fourth temptation of the Lord." But I think such a one will be convinced of what I say if he recalls the testimony of holy Job, "The life of man upon earth is a warfare.' For bearing this in mind, he will understand that the temptations to intemperance in the desert, to vainglory on the pinnacle, and to ambition on the mountain-top, were not the only ones endured by Christ.* Each of these was a manifest temptation. But more violent than any of them, although also more secret, was the temptation which from that time never left Him until His death on the cross. Nor is the hiddenness of this long-continued trial out of keeping with the correspondence I have asserted to exist between the four benefits and the four temptations. For with regard to the benefits also, the three preceding, which have been already conferred, are, as thou knowest, very apparent and visible; whilst the fourth, which is to fulfil our longing for eternal life, has not yet been bestowed, not yet experienced. What wonder, therefore, if the fourth temptation is concealed, since the benefit which occasions it is also concealed? But it is the most powerful and persistent of them all, because in it the wicked one makes use of all the resources of his malice to frustrate our hope.

In the first place, therefore, he strives to render thee ungrateful to the Author of thy nature by inspiring thee with an excessive solicitude for that nature: just as he had the impudence to say to Christ Himself during His fast in the desert, "Command that these stones be made bread." As if He Who fashioned us did not know

* So we read in St. Luke that, when Christ had repelled the third temptation, "the devil departed from Him *for a time*."—(Translator.)

our weakness and our many corporal necessities: as if He had no care for men Who feeds the very birds of the air! Oh, what ingratitude art thou guilty of towards Him Who, for thy sake, created the whole material universe, if ever thou shouldst dare to fall down and adore the demon, in order to obtain from him the worldly wealth thou dost covet! "All these will I give thee," he says, "if falling down thou wilt adore me." O most miserable one! Art thou, then, the creator of the things thou dost promise? Or how canst thou bestow what the Lord has created? Or how are those goods which He has made and retains in His own possession to be hoped for from thee, and to be purchased by paying thee homage? But as to the diabolical suggestion, "Cast thyself down," be on thy guard, whosoever thou art that hast been placed on the pinnacle of the temple; be careful of thyself, thou who standest in the watch-tower of the house of God; beware thou who appearest to hold the position of honour and eminence in the Church of Christ. How ungrateful shouldst thou prove thyself, nay rather how unjust to Him Who has entrusted to thy stewardship that "great mystery of piety," if thou wert to administer the same for thine own profit, "supposing gain to be godliness"! How unfaithful wouldst thou be to Him Who has consecrated this ministry with His own most precious Blood, if in it thou soughtest only thine own glory, which is nothing, if thou soughtest the things that are thine own, "not the things that are Jesus Christ's"! How unworthily wouldst thou correspond to His incredible condescension, Who has made thee so honourable in the dispensation of mysteries where He appears Himself so humble, Who has committed to thy charge His

holy sacraments, and invested thee with heavenly powers, with powers perhaps greater than He has communicated even to the supernal spirits: how unworthily wouldst thou correspond to all this goodness, wert thou to "cast thyself down" by "minding (not) the things that are above," but "the things that are upon the earth"! Yea, everyone that descends or casts himself down from the sublimity of virtue to the quest after vainglory, undoubtedly requites with insult the goodness of the "Lord of virtues," Who suffered so much on earth in order to stamp our souls with the seal of His own divine sanctity.

Let us consider more attentively the first temptation, which takes occasion from corporal necessity to attack the soul; and let us see whether it ought not to be likened to the asp. This reptile wounds by fiercely biting, and stops its ears so that it may not hear the voice of the charmer. Now, what does the tempter strive to do in such temptations? He endeavours to stop and deafen the ear of the heart against the consolations of faith. But "the enemy had no advantage over Him" Who said, "not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," for he could not stop the spiritual ear of Christ. As to the temptation wherein it is said, "All these will I give thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me," do you not discern in it the very hiss of the infernal dragon insidiously inciting to sin? * This

* "In malum insidiantis suadibilem sibilum animadvertite draconis." This is quite a remarkable instance of onomatopoeia, and is obviously intended. Compare the well-known lines in which Milton describes the applause which greeted Satan's speech from his followers, just transformed into serpents:—

monster, we are told, lying concealed in the sand, can draw down to him by the power of his poisonous breath even the birds as they fly in the air. And what deadly poison was contained in that breath which he breathed upon the Lord, when he spoke the words, "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me"! But Christ was not like other birds, and the dragon's breath had no power to do Him harm.

What shall I say of the basilisk? The most terrible of all beasts is he, and the very sight of him is sufficient (so we are assured) to poison and kill human beings. Unless I mistake, this monstrous creature is a type of vainglory.* "Take heed," said the Saviour, "that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them." As if He should say to us, "Beware of the eyes of the basilisk." But whom are we told the basilisk has power to hurt? Only the man who does not see the basilisk. For if thou seest him before he has seen thee, he can do thee no harm, but (so they say) dies himself. At any rate, such is the case with the spiritual basilisk. Vainglory can kill only such as do not see it, the blind and the negligent, who expose themselves to it and present themselves before it: who

> "So having said, a while he stood, expecting
> Their universal shout and high applause
> To fill his ear: when contrary he hears
> On all sides from innumerable tongues
> A dismal universal hiss, the sound
> Of public scorn."—*Paradise Lost*, x. 504-509.

Cf. Virgil also:—

> "Saucius et serpens sinuosa volumina versat,
> Arrectisque horret squamis, et sibilat ore,
> Arduus insurgens."—*Æn.*, xi. 753-756.—(Translator.)

* In the preceding discourse, the basilisk was taken as a type, not of vainglory, but of envy. St. Bernard's justification of such various exegesis will be found in his Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, vol. i. p. 58.—(Translator.)

do not rather fix their eyes upon it, observe it, study it, and perceive how silly a thing it is, how transitory, how vain, how worthless. For thou slayest the basilisk by scrutinising him in this manner: thou art not conquered by vainglory, but art rather its conqueror and destroyer, having reduced it to smoke (so to speak), yea, brought it even to nothingness. There is no need, I think, to explain why I have understood as referring to vainglory the temptation contained in the words, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." For wherefore would He consent to do such a thing but in order to be seen and applauded by the crowd?

But notice, my brethren, how the basilisk concealed himself, so that he might not be observed before he was an observer. "For it is written," he said, "that He hath given His angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up." What is written, O malignant one? What, I ask, is written? "He hath given His angels charge over thee." Yes, but what is the charge He hath given? Consider, my brethren, and take notice how this wicked and deceitful basilisk suppresses that which would expose his imposture. For what is the charge given by God to His angels? That which follows in the psalm, "To keep thee in all thy ways." But does He charge them to keep me even if I should throw myself down a precipice? O miserable one, what manner of way is this which thou art suggesting, this headlong plunge from the pinnacle of the temple? Surely it would be more proper to speak of it as a ruinous fall than as a simple way. Or if a way it be, it is thy way, but not mine. Vainly hast thou employed as a temptation against the Head what was written for the comfort of

the body. For it is the body that requires to be guarded, and that occasions the fear lest it dash its foot against a stone. But the Head, Who has nothing to be afraid of, has consequently no need of protection.* Why dost thou not quote the passage which follows: "Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon"? Because no doubt these words appertain to thyself. Monstrous malignity is here designated by monstrous appellatives, and represented as doomed to be trampled on, not only by the Head, but by the whole body as well. For after having been thrice put to confusion, the demon no longer attacked the Lord with the craft of the serpent,† but exhibited against Him thenceforward the cruelty of the lion, unto contumely, and stripes, and blows, and death, yea, unto the death of the cross. However, the "Lion of the tribe of Juda hath conquered" and manifestly "trampled under foot the lion" of hell. So also against ourselves, my brethren, when he finds his other temptations unavailing, the infernal enemy gives full vent to his ferocious anger, and stirs up a persecution "such as hath not been from the beginning," in order that at least the bitterness of the tribulation might shut against our hopes the city of God. Happy the soul that, mighty in her virtue, tramples even the lion under foot, and prevails so far as to bear away by violence the kingdom of heaven!

Therefore, my dearest brethren, let us proceed in future with the utmost wariness and circumspection,

* Christ, as being absolutely incapable of sin or deception, had no need of angelic guardianship, but employed the angels as His ministers. Cf. Suarez, t. ii, p. 754.—(Translator.)

† The asp, basilisk, and dragon are comprehended under the generic name of serpent.—(Translator.)

like persons walking on asps and basilisks. Let us be always on our guard against every "root of bitterness," so that none of us may be found fractious, or arrogant, or impatient, or unforgiving, or disobedient. Let us not cast ourselves down, but rather let us rise above and leap over the deadly fascination of temporal glory; so that, according to what is written—"A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings"—we may also "trample under foot the lion and the dragon," undismayed by the roaring of the one, and untouched by the poison of the other. These four monsters, so it seems to me, lie in wait for the four cardinal passions of our nature, one for each. What passion does the dragon study to surprise? Doubtless, cupidity, because he knows that it is the root of all evils, and how readily it corrupts the heart. Hence he said to the Lord with such urgency, "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." As for the lion, there is no need to inform you that his terrific roaring is only heard at the gates of fear. The asp is known to haunt the threshold of sadness and he hopes by his biting to gnaw his way through the door. Hence he did not dare to approach Christ until he observed Him to be hungry. Joy, on the other hand, has need to beware of the basilisk, because it is by the avenue of this affection that he is wont to dart into the soul his poisonous glances: that is to say, vainglory can only hurt us by means of the vain joy it engenders.*

* According to St. Augustine, the verse under discussion here contains a prediction of the four kinds of persecutors from whom the Church was destined to suffer: the asp, typifying the Jews; the basilisk, the heretics; the lion, the pagans; and the dragon, Antichrist. For other interpretations see Bellarmin's Commentary.—(Translator.)

But consider also, my brethren, if we cannot oppose to these four temptations the four cardinal virtues. Where is the man that does not tremble when the lion begins to roar? If there be any such, look upon him as a man of fortitude. But when the lion has been baffled, the dragon conceals himself in the sand, in order to attract the soul by his poisonous breath, blowing into her (if I may so speak) the desire for earthly things. Who shall be able to avoid this hidden danger? No one certainly but the man of prudence. But perhaps whilst thou art carefully guarding thyself against both the lion and the dragon, thou meetest with some disappointment: and behold the asp makes his appearance at once, because this he regards as a favourable opportunity. Who shall avoid impatience under the sting of this asp? Only he that is temperate and modest, knowing, like the Apostle, how "to abound and to suffer need." It is now, I think, after such victories, that the evil eye (of the basilisk) will try to fascinate thee with its treacherous charms. And shalt thou be able to turn away thy face? Most assuredly, if yet thou art a just man, who not only does not take to himself the glory that belongs to God, but even declines to accept it when offered to him by another; who not merely does what is just, but does it justly; who does not his justice before men to be seen by them; who, lastly, does not make his justice a reason for holding his head high. For the virtue of justice is closely related to humility *; it is the virtue which purifies the intention; and it acquires merit the more truly and abundantly in proportion as it arrogates nothing to itself.

* Cf. St. Bernard's Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, ol. ii. p. 41, note.—(Translator.)

FIFTEENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Insufficiency of Human and Angelic Protection, without the Divine; and on what is meant by knowing the Name of God.

"Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known My name."

"Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened," says the Lord Jesus, "and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you . . . and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." He calls to refreshment them that labour, He invites to rest them that are burdened. Nevertheless, He does not promise to relieve them at once of every labour and burden, but only to exchange the labour and the burden which oppresses them for another, for a sweet yoke and a light burden, wherein, although it is not apparent how, they shall yet find rest and refreshment. Heavy, no doubt, is the burden of iniquity, sitting upon the talent of lead.* Under this weight was the Psalmist groaning when he exclaimed, "My iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." What, then, is the burden of Christ? What is this light burden which He offers us? As I believe, it is the burden of His benefits. A light and sweet burden, surely, yet only for him who feels it, who has experience of it; because

* This seems to be an allusion to Zacharias v. 7-8, of which the Saint's reading differed apparently from the Vulgate. Cf. Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, vol. i. p. 268.—(Translator).

if thou feelest it not or dost not make account of it, it becomes very heavy indeed, yea, and very dangerous. Man, my brethren, is a beast of burden during the whole time of his mortality. If he yet bears the weight of his sins, his burden is an oppressive one. If the load of guilt has perchance been removed from his shoulders, he is now indeed less painfully laden; but if he is truly wise, he shall discover this very unburdening to be itself no less sensible a burden than the burden of which it relieves him. For God burdens us by unburdening us. He burdens us with His goodness when He unburdens us of our sins. Listen to the voice of a benefit-burdened soul: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" Listen to another, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." And to another, "I have always feared God as waves swelling over me, and His weight I was not able to bear." "I have always feared," says holy Job. That is, not only before, but also after obtaining the benefit of grace and pardon. Happy he who is thus always fearful, and is as much afraid of being oppressed by the benefits of God as by the weight of his own sins! *

My brethren, the reason why, in the Holy Scriptures, the divine beneficence, so constant and so bountiful towards us, is kept continually before our eyes, is in order to excite us to gratitude and to inflame us with love. "He hath given His angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways." "What more could (He) have done for thee and hath not done it?" But I know what thou art

* The Saint is here insinuating that the benefits of God oppress the soul when they are not requited with thanksgiving. —(Translator.)

now thinking of, high-born creature that thou art. Thou art thankful indeed to the angels of the Lord for their kindness in keeping thee: but thy soul is yearning for the Lord of the angels. Thou art wishing and praying that He would not be content with sending servants, but would come and speak to thee Himself; that He would kiss thee, not through any intermediary, but with the kiss of His own Mouth. Thou hast heard Him promise that "thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon"; nor art thou unaware of the victory won over the dragon by Michael and his angels. Nevertheless, not to Michael, but to Michael's Lord do thy desires cry aloud, "Deliver me, O Lord, and set me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me." The soul that has such dispositions may be said to seek a refuge not only higher than what is high, but higher than all except the highest. Therefore, inasmuch as she says with sincerity, "Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope," she deserves to receive the answer, "Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge."

For the Lord, Who is "compassionate and merciful," does not disdain to be the hope of the miserable; He does not refuse to show Himself the Deliverer and the Protector of them that trust in Him. "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver Him: I will protect him, because he hath known My name." Very necessary is this protection; for "unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it," whether he be an angel or a man. "Mountains are round about" Jerusalem, but that would not be sufficient for its protection, nay, it would be no

protection at all, unless also "the Lord is round about His people." With reason, therefore, is it said of the Spouse in the Canticle, that after finding "the watchmen who kept the city"—I should rather have said, after she had been found by the watchmen, since she was not seeking them but the Bridegroom—she did not pause, but having questioned them briefly concerning her Beloved, sped forward more swiftly in pursuit of Him. For her heart had put its hope, not in the watchmen, but in the Lord. And had anyone tried to induce her to seek a refuge outside of Him, she was ready to answer with the Psalmist, "In the Lord I put my trust: how do you say to my soul: Get thee away from hence to the mountain like a sparrow?" The Corinthians were not careful to follow this example of the Spouse. For on meeting the watchmen, they turned aside to tarry with them instead of passing on, and so began to say, "I indeed am of Paul, and I am of Apollo, and I am of Cephas." But what was the conduct of these sober-minded sentinels, these vigilant watchmen?—for they could not keep the Spouse to themselves, being virtuously jealous of her, jealous of her "with the jealousy of God," and having "espoused (her) to one Husband, that they might present (her) as a chaste virgin to Christ." "They struck me and wounded me," she complains. Wherefore did they treat her thus? Unless I mistake, they were trying to make her pass on in order that she might find her Beloved. And she adds, "The keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me," doubtless to enable her to run more freely. It is worth while noticing with how much force the Apostle strikes and with what kind of

arrows he wounds those whom he considered to be tarrying with the watchmen, when they should be passing on. "Was Paul then crucified for you?" he asks, "or were you baptised in the name of Paul?" And again, "For while one saith: I indeed am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollo; are you not men? What then is Apollo, and what is Paul? The ministers of Him Whom you have believed." "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him." This may be paraphrased thus: "Not in the keepers, whether men or angels, hath he hoped, but in Me, expecting nothing of good even at their hands, except from Me. For he knows that 'every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.' From Me is the vigilance which men keep over him in his external conduct, because I have entrusted this to the care of human keepers. From Me likewise is the watchful guardianship of the holy angels, who observe the more hidden affections of his soul, powerfully excite him to virtue, and repel the suggestions of the wicked one. But the intimate surveillance over the most secret thoughts and intentions of his heart is not only from Me, but must also be exercised by Me in person, because no created eye, human or angelic, can penetrate to this sanctuary." *

* "In two ways can the thought of the heart be cognised. It can be cognised in its effect, and that not only by the angels but even by men. Yet the more interior is this effect, the greater is the penetration required for perceiving it. Sometimes the thought may be discovered from external actions, sometimes also from alterations in the body. And physicians can even discern certain affections of the soul by examining the pulse. Much more, then, can the angels and the demons read our thoughts in this way, in proportion as their keener intellectual acumen takes cognisance of more subtle bodily changes. . . . Otherwise the thoughts can be perceived directly as they exist in the intellect, and the affections (intentions) as they are in the will. In this way none but God can know

My brethren, let us acknowledge these three orders of keepers; and with respect to each, let us discharge the duties which are incumbent upon us. Let us imitate the Apostle by "providing good things not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of all men," and in the sight of the angels. Let us endeavour to please all in all, but especially Him Who is supreme and sovereign over all. Let us "sing praise to Him in the sight of the angels," so that in these blessed spirits may be fulfilled what is written, "They that fear Thee shall see me and shall be glad: because I have greatly hoped in Thy words." "Obey your prelates and be subject to them," as the Apostle commands, "for they watch as being to render an account of your souls: that they may do this with joy and not with grief." But indeed, brethren, I must confess that there is not much need to admonish you concerning this duty, that I have not much cause for anxiety with regard to your obedience, all thanks to God to Whose grace it is entirely due. For what is my joy and my glory if it be not your ready obedience, and your irreproachable lives? And if I could have the certain assurance that the angels also can discover nothing unworthy in you; that nothing of the anathema of Jericho * is

the thoughts of the heart or the affections (intentions) of the will. The reason is: because the will of a rational creature is subject to God alone, and He alone can work on it, as being its principal Object and ultimate End. And hence those things which depend upon or exist in the will alone can be known (directly) only to Him. Now it is manifest that it depends on the will whether the intellect actually considers such or such objects, because when one has the habit of science, or the *species intelligibles* in his mind, he can use them as he wills." (St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, I. q. lvii. a. iv.—(Translator.)

* "And let this city (Jericho) be an anathema, and all things that are in it, to the Lord" (Josue vi. 17).

concealed in any of you; that none of you is guilty of murmuring or of secret detraction; that none of you is insincere or remiss in religious observance; that none of you entertains in his mind illicit images, which, alas! are wont to produce evil motions even in the body: had I full certainty on all these points, my joy and my glory would no doubt be greatly increased; although they would not as yet be perfect. For we are not so great as to be able to esteem it "a small thing" that we cannot be judged "by man's day," much less are we so great as to count it "a small thing" that we "are not conscious to ourselves of anything." But if even the truly great dread the secret Judge, how much more does it become us to think of His scrutiny with fear and trembling? Oh, if it were only given me to know for certain that there is nothing in any one of us displeasing to the eyes of Him Who alone has perfect knowledge of what is in man, and Who sees in him even that which he does not perceive himself! Dearest brethren, let us reflect with all possible diligence on that divine judgment. Let us fearfully, tremblingly, consider it in our meditations, and the more so, the less we are able to penetrate the unfathomable abyss of God's judgments, or His irrevocable decrees. Accompanied with this fear, our hope shall have merit: when we are thus solicitous, our expectation shall not be in vain.

Moreover, if you consider the matter carefully, you shall find that this very fear is itself the most solid and secure ground of our hope. For this fear is one of the greatest of God's gifts. Now the bestowal of present benefits confirms our expectation of favours still in store. Besides we are assured by the Psalmist

that "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." But if there is "life in His good will," as the same Prophet tells us surely in His "pleasure" is everlasting salvation. "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him." With what sweetness and generosity does God here promise never to fail them that put their trust in Him! For this is the whole merit of man, the placing of all his hope in Him Who can save him, body and soul. "In Thee," sings the Psalmist, "have our fathers hoped; they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them. They cried to Thee, and they were saved; they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded." Who ever "hath hoped in the Lord and hath been confounded"? Therefore, "trust in Him, all ye congregation of people." For "every place that your foot shall tread upon, shall be yours." Your foot is your hope.* Consequently, hope has a promise to obtain whatever it shall extend itself to, if yet it is entirely grounded on the divine goodness, so that it may be firm and stagger not. Why should it fear the asp or the basilisk? Why should it dread the lion's roar or the hiss of the dragon?

"Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him." "Besides, after delivering him, 'I will protect him' and watch over him, lest he should be attacked again, and again be in need of deliverance; provided, however, that 'he hath known My name'; provided only he hath not attributed his deliverance to his own virtue, but hath given glory to My name." "I will protect him because he hath known My name." The unveiling of His Countenance shall be our glorification. But meantime we must seek for our salvation in the

* "Pes tuus, spes tua."

knowledge of His name. His name gives us hope, His presence shall give us, not hope, but happiness. "For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for?" So speaks St. Paul, who tells us elsewhere that "faith cometh by hearing." And in another place he defines faith as "the substance of things to be hoped for." * "I will protect him, because he hath known My name." But *he* hath not known the name of the Lord whosoever takes it in vain, whosoever says to Him, "Lord, Lord," and doth not the things which He says. And he hath not known His name who neither honours Him as a Father nor fears Him as a Lord. He also hath not known His name who attends to "vanities and lying follies."

"Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord," says the Royal Prophet, "and who hath not regard to vanities and lying follies." But the name of the Lord was known to him who said, "For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." And we, my brethren, if we have indeed known that holy name which is "invoked upon us," we must desire to see it always hallowed in us; and we must pray for this, saying, according to the formula prescribed by the Lord, "Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Listen to what follows in the psalm I am expounding, "He hath cried to Me and I will hear him." This, my brethren, is the fruit of the knowledge of the Lord's name, the strong cry of fervent prayer. And further, the fruit of the cry is the hearing of the

* This is an argument to prove that hope is founded not on sight, but on hearing: Hope proceeds from faith, and "faith cometh by hearing"; *ergo*.—(Translator.)

Saviour. For how can anyone be heard by the Lord if he does not call upon Him? Or how can he call upon Him if he hath not known His name? All thanks to Him Who has revealed to men the Father's name, and in the invocation thereof constituted the fruit of salvation, according to what is written in the Prophet Joel, "Every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Amen.

SIXTEENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On holy Desires, and on the three great Benefits we must pray and hope for.

"He hath cried to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him."

"He hath cried to Me, and I will hear him." Here manifestly we have a "testament of peace," a pledge of piety, a compact of mercy and compassion. "He hoped in Me," saith the Lord, "and I will deliver him; he hath known My name and I will protect him; he hath cried to Me, and I will hear him." He does not say, "he is deserving, he is just, he is righteous, he is 'innocent in hands and clean of heart,' therefore will I deliver him, and protect him, and hear him." Had He used this or similar language, who would not despair? For who will venture to boast that his heart is perfectly pure? But now "with Thee there is merciful forgiveness, and by reason of (this) Thy law I have waited for (sustinui=hoped in Thee), O Lord." A most sweet law this, which places the right to be heard in the very cry of petition. "He shall cry to me," saith the Lord, "and I will hear him." And justly is a hearing refused to the soul that neglects to cry, either not praying at all, or praying with tepidity and indevotion. A loud cry in the ears of God is the ardour of strong desire.* On the other hand, a weak desire resembles the subdued sound of a whisper. How shall this

* "A loud cry in the ears of God is the ardent affection of the soul" (*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III. ch. 5).

penetrate the clouds? How shall it be heard in heaven? Therefore at the very beginning of the Lord's Prayer it is mentioned that the Father to Whom we are about to address ourselves has His home in heaven, in order to remind us that we must cry aloud and that our petition must be, as it were, shot up to Him by the impulsive force of spiritual fervour. For "God is a Spirit," and whosoever wishes that his cry shall come to Him, must cry in the spirit. Just as He does not, like man, look upon the face of man, but "regardeth the heart"; so His ears are open rather to the desire of the heart than to the voice of the lips. Hence it was that once, when Moses was silent exteriorly, the Lord said to him, "Why criest thou to Me?" For the affection of the Lawgiver's heart had sounded in His ears as a strong cry. Rightly therefore does the Royal Prophet call him "the God of my heart."

"He hath cried to Me, and I will hear him." It is not without reason that the faithful one cried thus to God. The greatness of his necessity extorted a loud cry from him. For what has he sought by his cries but consolation, deliverance, and glorification? This is evident from the answer he receives. For why should he obtain the promise of these favours had he prayed for something different? "He hath cried to Me and I will hear him." In what way wilt Thou hear him, O Lord? "I am with him in tribulation. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him." It seems to me, my brethren, that the three benefits promised in this place are to be especially referred to the great triduum which we shall soon be commemorating.* For Christ, because of us, "found tribulation and sorrow," when "having

* He refers to the three last days of Holy Week.—(Translator.)

joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." Nevertheless, "the things concerning (Him) had an end," as He predicted before His passion. And therefore at the moment of His death He exclaimed, "It is consummated"; and after that He rested awhile. But He had not to wait long for the glory of His resurrection. Early in the morning of the third day, the Divine Sun of justice arose unto us from the sepulchre. Thus, therefore, both the fruit of His tribulation and the truth of His deliverance were made manifest in the visible fact of His glorification. But for ourselves also, as I think, a similar triduum can be discovered. "I am with him in tribulation," saith the Lord. Does not this seem to refer to the day of our tribulation, to the day of our crucifixion, when that is fulfilled in us which Christ has foretold, saying, "In the world you shall have distress"; and likewise His Apostle, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution"? From this tribulation there can be no full and final deliverance before the hour of our death, because, in the words of the Wise Man, "a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all." This, then, is the day in which the Lord promises to deliver us, when the world shall no longer have power to injure us, either in body or in soul. As for our glorification, that is reserved for the last day of all, the day of the general resurrection, when that which "is sown in corruption shall rise in incorruption," when that which "is sown in dishonour shall rise in glory."

But, my brethren, how do we know that the Lord is with us in tribulation? By the very fact that we

ourselves are in tribulation. For which of us could face it, which of us could endure it, which of us could persevere under it, without His support? Oh, then dearest brethren, "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations," not only because "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," but also because "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart." Hence the Psalmist sings, "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." In this manner, therefore, according to what He has promised, He is with us "all days, even to the consummation of the world." But when will he deliver us and take us to Himself? This shall be when "we shall be taken up in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall be always with the Lord." When shall we appear with Him in glory? "When Christ shall appear, Who is our Life." But meanwhile it is necessary for us that He should conceal Himself from our view, in order that tribulation may precede deliverance, and deliverance glorification. Listen to the voice of one that has been delivered: "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest: for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee. For He hath delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling." "I will deliver him, and I will glorify him." Happy the man who, during his earthly pilgrimage, has Thee, O Lord, for his Consoler and for his "Helper in due times in tribulation"! But how much happier he whom Thou hast delivered and saved from such terrible evils! How much happier he who has been already delivered from the "snare of the hunters," who has been "taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding,

or deceit beguile his soul"! But happiest of all and beyond compare shall be he whom Thou shalt have taken to Thyself, whom Thou shalt have "filled with the good things of Thy house," and conformed to the brightness of Thy glory! *

"And now," my little children, "let us cry to heaven, and the Lord our God will have mercy on us." "Let us cry to heaven," I say, because under heaven there is nothing but labour, and sorrow, and vanity, and vexation of spirit. For "the heart of man is perverse above all things, and unsearchable," and his "imagination and thought are prone to evil from his youth." "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good." I have the "law of sin" in my members, "fighting against the law of my mind." Moreover, "my heart hath forsaken me," and my "body is dead because of sin." Truly "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," when "the whole world is seated in wickedness." How wicked is the world now in all its ways! How wickedly are worldly desires known to war against the soul! Then there are "the rulers of the world of this darkness," "the spirits of wickedness in high places," the aerial powers, and amongst them "the old serpent, more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth." These, my brethren, are all the things, which are under the sun: they are all that can be found under heaven.

* The three degrees of blessedness mentioned here correspond to the three promises of the text: "(1) I am with him in tribulation, (2) I will deliver him, (3) and I will glorify him." The first is enjoyed by every man who lives under the divine protection; the second belongs to them that die in the grace of God, and whose salvation is thus secure; the third is reserved for the general resurrection, when the elect shall be glorified in body as in soul. See also note at page 323.—(Translator.)

To which of them all shalt thou run for refuge? From which of them all canst thou hope to obtain any assistance or consolation? If thou lookest within thyself, thou shalt find thy heart withered and thyself "forgotten as one dead from the heart." If thou lookest below thee, thou shalt see that "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul." And shouldst thou gaze about thee, thou shalt perceive how "the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." Seek, therefore, above thee. But be careful to pass over the aerial powers. For these, being robbers, and knowing that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," lie in ambush between heaven and earth. Pass them by, therefore, pass by these wicked watchmen, who so tirelessly observe and guard the way, lest anyone from earth should enter the city of God. Should they strike thee, should they wound thee, as happened to the Spouse in the Canticle, leave them thy outer garment, as Joseph did of old to the temptress; leave them also thy inner garment, so that, like the young man in the Gospel, thou mayest flee from them naked. Did not the Lord deliver into the hands of the wicked one not only the outer, but also the inner garment of holy Job, when He gave Satan power over his substance and his flesh, with the condition, however, that his life should be saved? Therefore, my brother, lift up thy heart: lift up thy voice as well, and thy desire, and thy hope, and thy intention, and thy whole life. Cry to heaven, and cry aloud that thou mayest be heard, and that the Father Who is in heaven "may send thee help from the sanctuary, and defend thee out of Sion," according

to the prayer of the Psalmist: that He may now "give thee help from trouble," afterwards deliver thee from tribulation, and glorify thee at last in the general resurrection. These in truth are great things to ask, but Thou, the great Lord, hast promised them. Thy promise is the ground and motive of our hope, and it is from the same we have the courage to sing,

"When our prayers from love proceed,
Thou art promise-bound to heed." *

* "Si corde clamemus pio
Certe debes ex promisso."
From the Matins hymn for Lent.—(Translator.)

SEVENTEENTH SERMON ON PSALM XC.

On the Value of Tribulation and on the Reward of the Just.

"I will fill him with length of days; and I will show him My salvation."

It is a happy coincidence for us, my brethren, that this verse of the psalm applies so well to the present season. Very soon we shall be celebrating the resurrection of the Lord, and now his own resurrection is promised to each one of us: so that the members may more joyously commemorate as accomplished in their Head what they look forward to see sometime accomplished in themselves also. Happily, therefore, ends the song with the promise of so happy an end to the singer. Joyous is its consummation which sings of a consummation so joyous. "I will fill him with length of days; and I will shew him My salvation." I have often reminded you, dearest brethren, that, according to the teaching of St. Paul, "godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Hence the same Apostle writes in another place, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting." This is the fulness, this is the length of days, promised in the verse which I am now discussing. For what is so long as eternity? What is so long as that which is confined within no limits? Truly a happy end is life everlasting, a happy end which knows no ending.

And evidently that whereof the end is so good, must likewise be good itself. Let us therefore embrace sanctification, because it is good, because it leads to a life which endureth for ever. Let us "follow peace and holiness; without which no man shall see God." "I will fill him," saith the Lord, "with length of days, and I will shew him My salvation." This is the promise of the Right Hand of God: it is the gift of His Right Hand, which holy Job prayed or rather predicted of old that He would extend to him, saying, "To the work of Thy Hands Thou shalt reach out Thy Right Hand." In this Hand "are delights even to the end," as the Psalmist tells us. *He* also desired to have this Right Hand reached out to him, and obtained his request, the same of whom the Royal Prophet says in another place, "He asked life of Thee: and Thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever." But still more clearly spoke the Wise Man, "Length of days is in His Right Hand, and in His Left Hand riches and glory." "Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days?" For this life by which we live upon earth is rather a death than a life. It is not a pure life, but a dying life. We say that a man is dying when he is manifestly approaching death. But what have we been doing from the very first moment in which we began to live, but approaching death and beginning to die? And moreover, the days of our earthly life, such as it is, are "few and evil," according to the testimony of the holy Patriarch Jacob. But *there* we shall truly live where life is pure and vivid. There we shall enjoy good days, where the length of the days is interminable. Thanks to Him Who disposeth all things, not alone

with power, but also with sweetness: thanks, I say, to Him, Whose providence has so arranged that the days full of evil should be few and quick in passing, whilst the good days in store are destined to endure for ever.

"I will fill him with length of days." By these words, my brethren, the Lord expresses more clearly what He has said in the verse preceding, namely, "I will glorify him." Where is the man that would not be content to be glorified by Him Whose works are all perfect? For the Divine Immensity cannot glorify anyone otherwise than immensely. That glorification must undoubtedly be great which is derived from the glory of God, "coming down from the magnificent glory," to borrow the language of St. Peter. And rightly is it called a magnificent glory, since it glorifies the creature so magnificently, with an eternity, an abundance, a plenitude of glory. Here, on earth, glory is deceitful and brightness is vain, and the days of our life are quickly ended. The man of wisdom will not desire such things. He will rather say from his heart to Him Who reads the heart, "I have not desired the day of man, Thou knowest." But I am not content with not desiring the day of man: I desire that it be not given me. For I know Who it is That said, "I receive not glory from men." Oh, how miserable are you "who receive glory from one another, and the glory which is from God alone, you do not seek"! The only glory which we neglect to seek is that which alone is lasting unto length of days, which alone has fulness. "The days of man are short," says holy Job. And the Psalmist, "Man's days are as grass: as

the flower of the field, so shall he flourish"; to which the Prophet Isaias adds, "The grass is withered and the flower is fallen: but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." He is the true Day That "knoweth no setting," the eternal Truth, and the true Eternity, and by consequence the true and eternal Fulness. How could that glory fill us which is itself empty and vain, which is therefore often described as empty, in order to indicate that it is more capable of emptying our hearts than of filling them? During the present life, therefore, it is better for us to be humbled than exalted, it is better to experience want than pleasure; because, whereas all these things alike shall quickly pass away, the momentary enjoyment brings eternal pain and the momentary suffering an immortal crown.

Very profitable, my brethren, is that tribulation which "worketh trial" and leads to glory everlasting. "I am with him in tribulation," saith the Lord, "I will deliver him, and I will glorify him." Let us give thanks to the "Father of mercies," Who condescends to be with us in our tribulation, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation." Very profitable, as I have said, yea, and very necessary for us ought we to esteem the short-lived tribulation which merits everlasting glory, and the short-lived sadness which shall be changed into joy, into unending joy which no one can take from us, into joy full and abounding. Truly necessary is that necessity which obtains for us an unfading crown. Therefore let us not undervalue our present tribulation: it is only a small seed, but nothing small is the fruit which grows from it. Perhaps it is insipid, perhaps it is unpalatable, perhaps it is a "grain of mustard-seed." Whatever it be, let us not regard that

which is apparent in it, but only that which lies concealed. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Let us enjoy the foretaste of the promised glory; let us, like the Apostle, "glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God." Yea, and to speak more plainly with the same Apostle, let us "glory also in our tribulations," because therein consists our hope of glory. Consider if this be not the truth which the Doctor of nations intended to teach when he added, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope." These words should make it manifest to you that in saying, "And not only so, but we glory also in our tribulations," he did not mean to assign a new motive for glorying, but simply to explain the one already given where he declared that he gloried in hope. His purpose was not to commend to us a second source of glory, but to point out where we ought to look for the hope of glory and the glory of hope. For it is only in tribulation that we can find the hope of glory: I should rather have said that glory itself is contained in tribulation, just as the hope of the fruit, yea, just as the fruit itself is contained in the seed. In this way the kingdom of God is even now within us, as an immense treasure in "earthy vessels," or buried in an unprofitable field. It is truly there, I say, but as hidden. Happy the man that finds it! And who is he? The man who thinks more of the harvest than of the sowing. It is the eye of faith that discovers this hidden treasure, because it does not judge according to the face, but looks to that which appears not, and contemplates the things which are not seen. The Apostle reveals to us how truly he had discovered this treasure for himself,

and how he desired it should be found by others, when he says, "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Observe how he does not say, "that which is momentary and light of our tribulation *shall be rewarded with*," no, but, "*worketh for us* an eternal weight of glory." The glory, my brethren, is not manifest; it is laid up for us in our tribulation; the momentariness of our humiliation has hidden in it an eternity of glory; the lightness of our suffering contains a weight of happiness above measure exceedingly. In the meantime, therefore, let us make haste to purchase that field and to possess ourselves of the treasure which is hidden in the field. Let us "count it all joy when (we) shall fall into divers temptations." Let us say from our heart, let us say with conviction, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting."

"I am with him in tribulation," saith the Lord. This being so, shall I wish for anything but tribulation during my sojourn here on earth? "It is good for me to adhere to my God and (not only so, but likewise) to put my hope in the Lord God," and in Him alone, because He has said, "I will deliver him and I will glorify him." "I am with him in tribulation." Elsewhere He tells us, "My delights are to be with the children of men." How well He deserves to be called "Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us"! "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," said the Archangel to Mary. He is with us now, my brethren, in the fulness of grace; He will be with us hereafter in the fulness of glory. He came down from heaven that He might be "nigh unto them that are of a contrite

heart," that He might be with us in our tribulation. But the time will come when "we shall be taken up in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord"; if yet we are in the meantime careful to keep Him with us as the Companion of our way, Who alone can bring us safely to our heavenly home: or rather, He is Himself our Way now, as He shall be our Home hereafter. Lord, it is good for me to be in tribulation, provided that I have Thee as my Companion. Yea, it is better to be afflicted with Thee than without Thee to reign, or to feast without Thee, or without Thee to be glorified. It is better for me, O Lord, to embrace Thee in tribulation, better to endure with Thee the furnace of affliction, than without Thee to enjoy even the bliss of paradise. "For what have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" "The furnace trieth the gold, and the trial of affliction just men." There, Lord Jesus, it is there Thou art with us: it is there that Thou standest in the midst of those who are gathered together in Thy name; as of old Thou didst deign to appear with the three holy youths in the Babylonian furnace, so that even the pagan monarch saw Thee and wondering said, "I see four men loose and walking in the midst of the fire, and there is no hurt in them, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Why should we tremble? Why should we hesitate? Why should we shrink from this salutary furnace? Fiercely indeed the cruel fire rages: but courage! The Lord shall be with us in tribulation. "If God be for us, who is against us?" And if He wills to deliver us, who shall snatch us out of His Hand? Who shall be able to wrest us from His grasp, if it is His good pleasure to save us?

Finally, if He wills to glorify us, who shall dishonour us? If He raises us up, who shall cast us down?

Hear now, my brethren, with what manner of glory He will glorify us. "I will fill him," He says, "with length of days." Observe in the first place that He speaks of days in the plural, not to signify succession, but to indicate abundance. However, lest you should suppose succession to be implied, remember what the Psalmist says in another place, speaking to the Lord, "Better is (the) one day in Thy courts above thousands." We read in the sacred Scriptures of many holy and perfect men, that they migrated full of days from these changing days of ours, and we take the meaning to be that they died full of grace and merit. And to this fulness they attained through their having been day by day "transformed from glory to glory (not by their own spirit, but) as by the Spirit of the Lord." If, then, we give the name of day to grace and merit; if (as I have remarked before) we call "the day of man," the splendour of honour which comes from man, and that balefully brilliant glory which we seek from one another: why should not the plenitude of true glory be called the perfect day, or rather the full meridian? And if we can speak of the "divisions of graces" as so many mystical days, why may we not also represent as a multitude of days the varieties of heavenly glory? Listen lastly to the Prophet Isaias speaking evidently of such a multitude of days as involves no vicissitude or succession: "And the light of the moon," he says, "shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." Unless I am deceived, these are the days which the faithful King Ezechias

had in mind when he prayed that he might sing psalms all the days of his life in the house of the Lord: because by the gratitude which they shall feel for every gift of glory, so great and so manifold, and by the thanks which they shall render always and in all things, the blessed shall sing psalms, as it were, all the days of their lives to the name of the Lord.

"I will fill him with length of days," saith the Lord. These words may be thus paraphrased: "I know what he desires, I know what he thirsts for, I know what it is that shall give him satisfaction. Neither gold nor silver has any value in his eyes. Pleasures cannot content him, or worldly knowledge, or any earthly honour. All such things he regards as loss, he despises them, and 'counts them but as dung.' He has entirely emptied himself of them. For he will not allow himself to be occupied by earthly goods, wherewith, as he knows, he could never be filled. He does not forget to Whose image and likeness he has been made, and of Whose glory he is rendered capable. Neither is he willing to enjoy such material prosperity as would be detrimental to his eternal interests. Therefore 'I will fill him with length of days,' since nothing but the true light can refresh him, nor anything fill him but the eternal light. For the length of days which I promise him shall have no limit, the glory shall never wane, the fulness never weary. The eternity of his happiness shall make him secure, its truth shall render him glorious, and its plenitude jubilant." "And I will shew him My salvation." It is then he shall deserve to see what he has so long desired, when the King of glory will "present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot" on account of the brightness of the day,

" or wrinkle " owing to the absolute fulness. For the splendour of that brightness can no more endure disquiet or agitation in any soul than it can tolerate uncleanness. Hence it is that even now we are commanded to " follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see God." When, therefore the Lord shall have " satisfied thy desire with good things," so completely that thou shalt want for nothing more, thy soul being fully satiated and tranquillised by this plenitude, then shalt thou be able to gaze upon the tranquillity and the plenitude of the Divine Majesty, and shalt be made like to God because thou shalt see Him as He is. Or perhaps the words, " And I will shew him My salvation," ought to be understood in this sense : The beatified one, already full of all glory in himself and dwelling in a world of delights, shall also contemplate outside himself the salvation wrought by God, and the whole universe filled with His Majesty.*

Or again, we may, if we prefer, adopt the following exposition : In what He says, " I will shew him My salvation," the Lord is only explaining what manner of days He has promised. " I will fill him with length of days," He has said. Now someone might ask, how can there be any days in that supernal city, of which we read that no sun shall shine in it, and no night shall enshroud it? But we also read that " the glory of God hath enlighteneth it and the Lamb is the Lamp thereof." Here, then, is the answer : " I will shew him My salvation, so that, as the Evangelist says, the Lamb shall

* After the General Resurrection, the Blessed shall have opened to them a new source of delight in the contemplation of the glorified human bodies and of the whole material universe, which, as St. Paul says, " shall also itself be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God " (Rom. viii. 21).—(Translator.)

become his Light. No longer will I instruct him in faith or exercise him in hope : I will now fill him with vision as with the brightness of days without number. I will shew him My salvation, that is to say, I will shew him My Jesus ; so that he shall now and for ever contemplate Him in Whom he has believed, Whom he has loved, Whom he has always yearned for." "Shew us, O Lord, Thy mercy and grant us Thy Salvation." Shew us, O Lord, Thy Salvation "and it is enough for us." For he that seeth Him seeth Thee also, because Thou art in Thy Salvation and Thy Salvation is in Thee. "Now this is eternal life : That (we) may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." Therefore "now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace ; because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation," Thy Jesus and Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMONS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

FIRST SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the three Benefits which we owe to the Birth of Christ.

*"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda."**

The voice of joy has been heard in our land, "the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles" not "of the just," however, but of sinners. We have heard the "good word" the "consoling word," the word full of sweetness and "worthy of all acceptation." "Ye mountains, give praise with jubilation," and let "all the trees of the forest clap their hands" "before the face of the Lord because He cometh." "Hear, O yé heavens, and give ear, O earth." Let every creature, but especially thou, O man, be astonished and give praise to the Lord, because "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." Oh, what heart can be so flinty, what soul so insensible, as not to melt with love at hearing this announcement? What sweeter tidings could be published? What happier event could be proclaimed? Has the world ever before heard anything like this, or has news like this been ever told? "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." O short word of the "shortened Word," but full of heavenly sweetness! Truly love is here in labour, eager to pour out more

* These words are taken from the announcement of Christmas in the Cistercian Martyrology.—(Translator.)

plentifully the abundance of its mellifluous tenderness, and unable to find more adequate expression. For so perfect is the beauty and charm of this short verse that you cannot change a single iota without spoiling it. "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." O nativity spotless in sanctity, glory of the world, dear to man by reason of the greatness of the benefit it confers, inscrutable even to the angels because of the depth of its divine mystery, admirable to all in its novelty and unparalleled excellence! Nativity, which, to borrow the words of the Poet:

> "Had no precursor in the years before,
> And peerless shall remain for evermore." *

O birth of Christ, alone unaccompanied by pain, alone pure and immaculate, not violating but consecrating the Mother's integrity! O nativity, beyond nature, yet designed for the good of nature; transcending nature by thy miraculous excellence, restoring nature by the power of thy mystery! My brethren, "who shall declare (this) generation?" The Angel announces it, the power of the Most High overshadows it, the Holy Ghost descends upon it. A virgin believes, a virgin conceives by her faith, she brings forth as a virgin, and remains ever a virgin. Who can help wondering at all this? The Son of the Most High is born: God of God, begotten before the ages, is born to-day as a speechless Babe! Who can now wonder sufficiently?

And this nativity has not been in vain, not in vain has been the condescension of the Divine Majesty.

* "Nec primam similem visa est, nec habere sequentem."—The Irish poet Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale*, iii. 39, who is here speaking of the Blessed Virgin.—(Translator.)

" Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." " Awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust." Behold the Lord cometh with salvation, He cometh with ointments, He cometh with glory. For Jesus cometh not without salvation, nor Christ without unction, nor without glory the Son of God, Who is Himself Salvation and Unction, Who is Himself Glory, according to what is written, " A wise son is the glory of his father." Happy the soul, which after tasting the fruit of His salvation, runs to the odour of His ointments, in order that she may see His glory, " the glory as it were of the Only-Begotten of the Father." Take courage all ye who have wandered away, because Jesus comes to seek and to save that which was lost. Ye that are sick be of good cheer, for Christ has come to anoint the contrite of heart with the unction of His mercy. Exult and be glad, ye who are ambitious of glory, since the Son of God has descended to you to make you co-heirs of His kingdom. Thus, O Lord, thus, I pray Thee, " heal me and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved," glorify me and I shall be glorious. Then shall I say with the Psalmist, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee, Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, Who healeth all thy infirmities, Who satisfieth thy desire with good things." As for me, my dearest brethren, I experience from these three things a threefold savour of sweetness in the announcement that " Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born." For why do we call His name Jesus unless because " He shall save His people from their sins? " And why has He willed to be

called Christ, unless because He "shall make the yoke to putrify at the presence of the oil?" And wherefore has the Son of God made Himself the Son of man if it be not to make men the sons of God? Who shall oppose His will? It is Jesus "That justifieth, who is he that shall condemn?" It is Christ That healeth, who is he that shall hurt? It is the Son of God That raiseth us up, who is he that shall cast us down?

Jesus is born: oh, rejoice all ye whomsoever the consciousness of sin foredooms to everlasting damnation! For the mercy of Jesus is greater than any degree of malice, greater than any number of crimes. Christ is born: let gladness arise in every soul which is struggling with long-established habits of evil. For no spiritual malady, no matter how inveterate, shall be able to stand before the face of the unction of Christ. The Son of God is born: exult thou who art wont to aspire to greatness, because the Giver of great rewards is at hand. My brethren, "this is the Heir," let us lovingly receive Him, "that the inheritance may be ours." For He Who hath given us His own Son, "how hath He not also with Him given us all things?" Let no one disbelieve it, let no one doubt it, for we are assured by a most trustworthy witness that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." The only-begotten Son of God willed to share His sonship with us, "that He might be the First-Born among many brethren." And in order that weak and pusillanimous mortals might be left no excuse for doubting this, He first made Himself the Brother of man, and the Son of man, by truly taking upon Him our human nature.

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." Notice the humility exhibited in the choice

of place. Not in Jerusalem, the city of the kings, is He born, but in Bethlehem, which is but "a little one among the thousands of Juda." O Bethlehem, heretofore little indeed, but now magnified by the Lord! Thou hast been made great by Him Who in thee has made Himself little from great. Exult, O Bethlehem, and through all thy streets let joyous alleluias be sung to-day! What city that ever hears of it will not envy thee that most venerable stable and the glory of that poor manger! Thy name is now famous throughout the whole world, and "all generations shall call (thee) blessed." Everywhere, "glorious things are said of thee, O city of God." Everywhere resounds the song of joy: "A Man is born in her and the Same hath founded her, the Most High."* Everywhere, I say, it is preached and proclaimed that "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." And not without purpose is the addition of the words, "of Juda," by which we are reminded of the promise made to the fathers by the mouth of the Patriarch

* "Numquid Sion dicet homo: et homo natus est in ea et Ipse fundavit eam Altissimus?" (Ps. lxxxvi. 5). It was thus St. Bernard and nearly all the Latin Fathers read this verse; not as it is now written: "Numquid Sion dicet: Homo et homo natus est in ea, et Ipse fundavit eam Altissimus?" which the Douay Translators render, "Shall not Sion say: This man and that man is born in her? and the Highest Himself hath founded her." But this is at variance with the Hebrew in which Sion is dative case, not nominative, and besides differs in gender from the verb. Moreover, the modern reading seems to make hardly any sense, whilst the patristic contains a prophecy of the Incarnation, and so this verse was much used by the early Christian apologists. The Greek has: "*μήτηρ Σιὼν ἐρεῖ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐγενήθη ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐθεμελίωσεν αὐτὴν ὁ ὕψιστος.*" This also appears to be unintelligible. But St. Jerome declares that the word "*μήτηρ*" (mother) was substituted by mistake for "*μήτι*" (numquid). Cf. Bellarmin.—(Translator).

Jacob, "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda nor a ruler from his thigh till He come That is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations." For though "salvation is of the Jews," yet it reaches "to the farthest parts of the earth." And the same Patriarch also prophesied, "Juda, thee shall thy brethren praise; thy hands shall be upon the necks of thy enemies." These and other predictions which are nowhere recorded to have been verified of the typical Juda, we now see fulfilled in Christ. For He is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda," of Whom it is added, "Juda is a lion's whelp: to the prey, my Son, Thou art gone up." A mighty Spoiler is Christ, Who "before He knew to call His Father and Mother carried off the spoils of Samaria." Christ is indeed a mighty Spoiler, Who "ascending on high, led captivity captive." He did not, however, take away anything from us, but rather "gave gifts to men." In this way, therefore, these and similar prophecies, which we perceive to be fulfilled in Christ, (of Whom also they were spoken), are recalled to our minds when we hear the announcement, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." And there is no longer any necessity for us to inquire whether anything of good can come from Bethlehem.

As to what concerns us, my brethren, we learn how He desires to be received from the fact that He chose Bethlehem for His birthplace. Perhaps there were then some who thought that a magnificent palace should be made ready in which the King of glory might be honourably entertained. But it was not for earthly honour that the "almighty Word leapt down from heaven from (His) royal throne," where "length of

days is in (His) Right Hand, and in (His) Left Hand riches and glory." He possessed from everlasting an inexhaustible store of all such things in heaven. One treasure, however, He could not find there, namely, the treasure of poverty, of which there was on earth an abundance and a superabundance, although man had no suspicion of its worth. It was, therefore, for the sake of this that the Son of God came down from His throne on high, in order to choose it for Himself and by His appreciation to teach us its value. Adorn, then, O Sion, adorn thy bridal couch : but let it be with the ornaments of poverty and humility. These are the swathing-clothes which please Him best ; these, as Mary bears witness, are the silks wherewith He delights to be clothed. Let us, therefore, " sacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians to the Lord our God."

Consider lastly, my brethren, that it is in Bethlehem of Juda Jesus is born, and study how each one of you may make himself a Bethlehem of Juda, for thus He will not disdain to be born in you also. Now Bethlehem means " the house of bread," and Juda signifies " praise " or " confession." Consequently, if thou fillest thy soul with the food of holy doctrine ; if also thou faithfully and with all possible devotion—unworthy though it must ever be—receive that Living Bread " Which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world " (I mean the Body of the Lord Jesus) so that His glorified Flesh may repair and strengthen the " old bottle " of thy body, which thus fortified shall be able to hold the new wine poured into it ; if, finally, thou livest by faith and art never obliged to avow with tears that thou hast " forgotten to eat

thy bread": thou art now become a Bethlehem, and comparatively fit to receive the Lord, if yet confession be not wanting. Then let "Judæa be thy sanctification," "put on praise and beauty," the robes wherewith Christ would have His ministers clothed. The Apostle, lastly, commends these two things very briefly where he says, "With the heart we believe unto justice and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." For justice in the heart is as bread in the house. That justice may be called bread is clear from the words of Christ, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Let justice, therefore, be in thy heart, the justice which is of faith, for this alone "hath glory before God." In thy mouth also have the confession which "is made unto salvation:" so shalt thou be able to receive with confidence Him Who is born in Bethlehem of Juda, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

SECOND SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the Spiritual Jews and the Spiritual Jerusalem, and the Desire which all the Blessed feel for our Salvation.

" O Juda and Jerusalem, fear ye not and be ye not dismayed : to-morrow you shall go out and the Lord will be with you." —II Par. xx. 17.

My brethren, I am here addressing the true Israelites, those who are Jews not according to the letter, but according to the spirit : the true seed of Abraham which we now behold multiplied in fulfilment of the promise we have read of in Genesis. For " not they that are the children of the flesh, but they that are the children of the promise, are accounted for the seed." And the Jerusalem to which I speak is not the Jerusalem that killed the prophets. For what consolation could I offer the city over which Christ wept and which has been given up to destruction ? But as it is to the spiritual Jews, so also is it to the spiritual Jerusalem (which has come down new out of heaven) that I say, " O Juda and Jerusalem, fear ye not." Fear not, ye true confessors,* who confess to the Lord not alone with your mouths, but with all your members and faculties, and with your whole being, having " put on confession " as a garment ; who glorify Him with all your vitals and all whose bones exclaim, " Lord, who is like to Thee ? "—very different from those who " confess that

* In the preceding sermon the holy Preacher mentioned that the word Juda signifies " confession," hence the true Jews are true confessors.—(Translator.)

they know God, but in their deeds deny Him." Your confession, my brethren, is then true and perfect when all your works are the works of God and all contribute to His glory. But let your confession be twofold, in order that you may be clothed in "double garments." I mean to say, you ought to unite the confession of your sins with the confession of the divine praises. For then you shall be Jews indeed if your whole life is a confession that you are sinners, deserving of much greater chastisement than you have received, and that God is the sovereign Goodness, Who commutes to the trivial and transitory sufferings of this life the everlasting punishment you have deserved. But he who has not an eager desire for penance seems to say by his conduct either that he has no need of penance, and so he refuses to confess his sins, or that penance is for him of no avail, and so he does not confess the divine goodness. Be ye, however, true Jews, be ye also the true Jerusalem, that so you may have nothing to fear. For Jerusalem means "the vision of peace," the vision (not the possession) whose "ends" (not whose beginning or whose middle) the Lord "hath disposed in peace." If therefore you have not peace, rather because you cannot have perfect peace in this world, at least gaze upon it, contemplate it, think of it, long for it. Let the eyes of your heart and the intention of your mind be ever directed towards peace, so that all your actions may be performed from the desire of the peace "which surpasseth all understanding." Let this be your aim in everything you do, that, being reconciled, "you may have peace with God."

It is to persons of such disposition I say, "Fear

ye not," it is to these I offer consolation, not to those who "have not known the way of peace." For were I to say to them, "To-morrow you shall go out," I should appear rather to threaten than to console. They alone who have the vision of peace and who "know if their earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven," they alone, I say, "desire to be dissolved" and are eager to "go out," not like those others who, as if afflicted with insanity, take pleasure in their bondage. For of the latter it would be more true to say that they go in when they die than that they "go out," because they go not out to light and liberty, but rather go in to darkness, to prison, and to hell. But to you, my brethren, I may truly say, "Fear ye not and be ye not dismayed; to-morrow you shall go out," and there shall be no alarm in your confines. You have indeed many antagonists: the flesh, which is the most domestic of all enemies; the present wicked world, by which you are surrounded; and the princes of darkness, who live in the air and lie in wait to surprise you. Nevertheless, "fear ye not and be ye not dismayed; to-morrow you shall go out." That is to say, you shall go out on the day after this, because to-morrow signifies next day. Thus the holy Patriarch Jacob said, "My justice shall answer for me to-morrow." There are, my brethren, three spiritual days, whereof it is written in the Prophet Osee, "He will receive us after two days, and on the third day He will raise us up." The first of these days is the day under Adam, the second the day in Christ, and the third the day with Christ. Hence the same Prophet continues, "We shall know,

and we shall follow on, that we may know the Lord" : and here it is said, "To-morrow you shall go out and the Lord will be with you." For these words are addressed to those who "have shortened (dimidiaverunt) their days," for whom has perished the day in which they were born, which is the day of Adam, the day of sin, the day cursed by Jeremias, who said, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born." We have all of us been born in that day. And God grant that it may perish for us also, that day of mists and clouds, that day of darkness and storm, the day which we owe to Adam, which we owe to the enemy, who seduced him with the promise that his eyes should be opened.

But behold the new day of redemption has dawned upon us, the day of reparation of the ancient fall, the day of everlasting felicity. "This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us be glad and rejoice therein," because "to-morrow (we) shall go out." And whence shall we go out, except from the confinement of this world, from the prison of this body, from the fetters of corporal necessity, of curiosity, vanity, and pleasure, which, even in spite of us, hold fast the feet of our affection ? For what has our spirit in common with the creatures of earth ? Why does it not desire spiritual things ? why not seek after spiritual things ? why not relish spiritual things ? O spirit of man, whose home is on high, what hast thou to do with the things below ? "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the Right Hand of God ; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth." But alas ! "the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many

things." The numerous necessities of this wretched body hold us back. The fascination of evil desires and worldly pleasures is as bird-lime to our souls, preventing their flight to heaven, yea, and it quickly drags them down again, if ever they should chance to soar aloft. Yet, " fear ye not and be ye not dismayed : to-morrow you shall go out," " out of the pit of misery and the mire of dregs." For in order to draw you forth thence, Christ first allowed Himself to " stick fast in the mire of the deep." Therefore, " fear ye not and be ye not dismayed : to-morrow you shall go out " of " the body of this death " and of all the corruption of sin. Spend this day in Christ, so that you also may walk even as He walked. For " he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked." " Fear ye not," therefore, " and be ye not dismayed ; to-morrow you shall go out," " and so shall (you) be always with the Lord." But perhaps from the fact that it is said expressly : " and the Lord will be with you," we are to infer that, whilst we live here below, it is possible for us to be with the Lord, viz., by being conformed to His will, although He may not be with us so as to consent to our desires. For we should be glad to be now at liberty, we wish to be at once dissolved, we are impatient to " go out " ; but He, for some secret cause, still defers to gratify our longing. However, " to-morrow we shall go out, and the Lord will be with us," in such a way that our pleasure shall be His pleasure, and there shall be no longer the least opposition, but the most perfect harmony between His will and ours.

Therefore I say, " Juda and Jerusalem, fear ye not

and be ye not dismayed" if you have not yet attained to that degree of virtue which you desire. Let the humility of your confession make up for what is wanting to the perfection of your lives, because, as the Psalmist says of himself to God, "Thy eyes have seen my imperfection." For the reason why the Lord has commanded His "commandments to be kept most diligently" is in order that men, made sensible of their shortcomings, and realising their insufficiency to fulfil what is enjoined, may have recourse to the divine mercy, saying with holy David, "Thy mercy is better than lives." Thus, since they are unable to clothe themselves in the garments of justice and innocence, they should at least appear vested in the humility of confession. For "confession and beauty are before Him," that is to say, find favour in His eyes, if yet (as I have already remarked) it be not the confession of the mouth only, but of the whole man, so that all our bones shall exclaim, "Lord, who is like to Thee?" —and this with a view to peace alone, and from the sole desire of being reconciled to God. It is only to such are addressed the words, "O Juda and Jerusalem, fear ye not and be ye not dismayed: to-morrow you shall go out." That is to say, as soon as the soul parts from the body, all the desires and affections by which she is now attached to earthly objects and drawn around the world, shall be entirely dissolved, so that, freed from this bondage, she "shall go out and the Lord will be with" her. Such happiness may indeed seem excessive to you if you consider only yourselves, and look not to the "expectation of the creature" which "waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God." Does not the whole universe look forward to this

consummation? "For the creature was made subject to vanity"; when, on the fall of man, whom the Lord had "made master of His house and ruler of all His possession," his whole inheritance participated in his corruption. As a consequence, the air was deprived of its original temperateness; the earth was cursed in the works of man, and vanity was given power over all earthly creatures.

Nor shall the inheritance be renewed until the heir has been first restored. Hence, according to the testimony of the Apostle, "it groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now." And "we are made a spectacle," not only "to the world" but also "to angels and to men." Hence the Psalmist says to God, "The just wait for me until Thou reward me." And when the martyrs prayed for the day of judgment—not from any desire of vengeance, but because they long for the perfection of happiness which they shall then obtain*—they received the divine answer bidding them to "rest for a little time till their fellow-servants and

* The holy Preacher here insinuates what he openly teaches elsewhere (*De dilig. Deo*, xi.; *De Consid.*, v. 4; Serm. i. and iii., de omnibus sanctis), namely, that the souls of the saints, although they are in heaven and enjoy the Beatific Vision, are not yet perfectly united to God by love, nor (by consequence) perfectiy happy, so long as they are separated from their bodies. This is the view in which St. Augustine appears to have finally rested, after repeatedly affirming that the just souls are not admitted to the Beatific Vision at all before the General Judgment (*De Civit. Dei*, xii. 9; In Joan., 49; Retract., i. 14). The Angelic Doctor at first followed St. Bernard, but afterwards changed his mind, and taught that the reunion with the flesh shall increase the soul's happiness, not "intensivè," but only "extensivè." This is the opinion now generally received; but the question has never been decided dogmatically. For the Canon of the Council of Florence (1438) stating that "the souls of the saints are now perfectly happy, but shall have greater happiness after the Resurrection," may be and has been interpreted in favour of both views.—(Translator.)

their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, shall be filled up." They have already received each a single robe ; but they shall not be clothed in double garments until we also shall be clothed with them. We even hold as pledges and hostages their sacred bodies, without which they cannot be consummated, nor shall they be restored to them without us. Therefore the Apostle says of the patriarchs and prophets, " All these, being approved by the testimony of faith, receive not the promise, God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us." Oh, if we only knew with what eagerness they await, with what ardour they desire our coming ! how earnestly they seek and how gladly they hear whatever conduces to our spiritual welfare !

But why do I speak of those who have learned compassion from the things which they suffered, since even the holy angels long for our advent ? Worms though we are and vilest dust, yet is it not with us as with living stones that the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem have to be repaired ? And with what eagerness, think you, do these citizens of paradise yearn to see the integrity of their city restored ? Oh, how anxiously do they await the arrival of the rational stones with which the fissures in their wall shall be built up ! How they speed to and fro between God and us, most faithfully representing our groans to Him, and most lovingly bearing back to us His graces ! Assuredly they will not disdain to recognise us as their associates seeing that already they minister to us as our servants. For " are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation ? " Let us hasten, therefore, my dearest

brethren, let us hasten, I pray you. The whole multitude of the heavenly host are awaiting us. We made the angels rejoice when we were converted to penance; let us go forward, let us make haste to perfect the joy which our happiness causes them. Woe to thee, whosoever thou art, that wouldst wallow again in the mire and go back to the vomit! Dost thou expect to have them propitious to thee at the judgment whom thou art now disposed to defraud of a joy so great and so ardently longed for? They were filled with gladness when we gave ourselves up to penance; they exulted over us, because they saw us returning, so to speak, from the very mouth of hell. What now shall be their feelings if they behold us turning away from the portals of paradise and going back, after placing one foot in heaven? For the heart may dwell in heaven even though the body abides on the earth.

Make haste, then, my brethren, make haste, I say, because not the angels only, but the Creator of the angels Himself is awaiting you. "The marriage indeed is ready," but the house is not yet full. There are others still awaited in order that "the marriage may be filled with guests." God the Father is looking out for you with yearning, not alone "for His exceeding charity wherewith He hath loved us," as the Apostle bears witness (and "the only-begotten Son, Who is in the Bosom of the Father, He likewise hath declared" it, saying: "The Father Himself loveth you") but also for His own sake, as He tells us by His Prophet, "It is not for your sake I will do this, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake." For who can doubt the fulfilment of the promise which He (the

Father has made to His Son in the words, "Ask of Me and I will give Thee the gentiles for Thy inheritance"? And elsewhere He says, "Sit Thou at My Right Hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool." Now all Christ's enemies have not been crushed so long as they continue their attacks upon us who are His members. Nor shall the promise be entirely fulfilled until death, the last of our enemies, has been utterly destroyed. And as concerns the Son, who does not know how much He desires "the fruit of (His) nativity," the fruit of the whole life which He lived in the flesh, the fruit of His cross and of His death, the price of His most precious Blood? Is He not to deliver up the kingdom which He has acquired "to God and the Father"? Is He not to restore to the Father those creatures of His for the sake of whom He was sent down to the earth? And the Holy Spirit also expects us. For He is the Charity and the Benignity of God, and it is in Him we have been predestined from everlasting. Surely then we cannot doubt that He desires to see that predestination accomplished.

Therefore, my brethren, since all the court of heaven desires and expects us, let us "run not as at an uncertainty." Let us run by holy desires and by our progress in virtue. For to grow in sanctity is to hasten forward. Let each one of us repeat with the Psalmist, "Look upon me and have mercy on me, according to the judgment of them that love Thy name." That is to say, "Show me mercy, not according to my deserts, but according to the good will of them that love Thee truly." Let us also repeat with Judas Machabeus, "As it shall be the will of God in heaven so be it done," and with the Lord Himself, "Thy

will be done on earth as it is in heaven." For we know that it is written, " If God be for us, who is against us ? " Also, " who shall accuse against the elect of God ? " And " Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will ? " Therefore, dearest brethren, let this be your consolation in the meantime until " you shall go out and the Lord will be with you." To which happy going out may He in His great mercy lead us, and to that glorious to-morrow. And on this nearer to-morrow also may He vouchsafe to visit us and to remain with us, so that if any one amongst us happens to be held captive by some temptation, he may " go out " therefrom to-morrow, through the grace of Him who cometh to " preach a deliverance to them that are shut up," and that with a holy gladness we may receive the crown of joy from the Hand of our new-born King, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth one God for ever and ever. Amen.

THIRD SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the Three Days, the Three Watches, the Three Winds, and the Three Unions.

"To-day you shall know that the Lord will come and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord." *—Exod. xvi. 6-7.

Oh, "all you that are earth-born and ye sons of men," "awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust," because the Physician is coming to the sick, the Redeemer to the captives, the Way to the wanderers, Life to the dead; because He is coming Who "will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea," Who will "heal all our diseases," and will bear us back upon His own shoulders to the place of honour which originally was ours. This no doubt, is an exercise of great power. But far more wonderful is the mercy therein displayed: that He who is able to succour us should be willing thus to come. "To-day you shall know that the Lord will come." These words, my brethren, have been set down in Holy Scripture in their proper place and order as relating to an event of an earlier time; yet not unappropriately are they addressed to

* This seems to be only an adaptation of Exodus xvi. 6–7, where the Vulgate has, "In the evening you shall know that the Lord hath brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord." But the text as given by St. Bernard is found also in the Introit of the Mass of Christmas Eve, and in the office for the day.—(Translator.)

us by mother Church on the vigil of the Lord's nativity. For the Church is guided by the counsel and by the Spirit of Him Who is at once her Bridegroom and her God. She has the Beloved "abiding between her breasts," guarding her heart for Himself, and occupying it like a king upon his throne. She is the Spouse who has wounded His Heart, who with the eye of contemplation pierces the abyss of God's hidden designs, and so makes an everlasting dwelling for herself in His Heart and for Him in her own. Whenever, therefore, she changes the meaning or the application of a text of Holy Scripture, the words in the accommodated sense possess even greater authority than belongs to them in their primary signification. And perhaps the adapted meaning surpasses the original by as much as the reality excels the image; the light, the shadow; the mistress, the maid-servant.

"To-day you shall know that the Lord will come." It appears to me, my brethren, that in these words we have expressly commended to our notice two days of unequal duration. The first of these embraces the whole period from the fall of the first man to the dissolution of the world. It is the day which the saints, as we read, have so often cursed. For when Adam was exiled from that most luminous day of innocence in which he had been created, and thrust out into the miseries consequent on his sin, he entered upon a day of spiritual darkness in which the light of truth was all but extinguished. We have been born, every one of us, in this darksome day, if day it may be called and not rather night. However, I will call it day on account of the light of reason, which, as a glimmering spark, has been left to relieve its gloom,

by God's unconquerable mercy.* But the second day shall shine " in the splendours of the saints " for everlasting ages, after the break of that most serene morning (whereon we hope and pray that mercy shall be granted us) when death shall be " swallowed up in victory," and when the brightness of the true and living Light shall occupy all things above and below, within and without, expelling the shadows and the darkness. " Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning," implores the Psalmist, and elsewhere he acknowledges, " We are filled in the morning with Thy mercy." But let us return to our own day, which by reason of its comparative brevity is called " a watch of the night," which is " counted as nothing and vanity " by that familiar mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost who says, " all our days have vanished," and, " my days are vanished like smoke," and, " my days have declined like a shadow." The holy Patriarch Jacob, who " saw the Lord face to face " and conversed with Him so familiarly, spoke of the days of his pilgrimage as " few and evil." Nevertheless, even in this day God gives man the light of reason and understanding. But it is further necessary that, at the moment of our departure from this world, He shall illumine our souls with the splendour of His own divine knowledge.

* " For the first man, Adam, being corrupted by sin, the punishment of his sin has descended upon all mankind. So that nature itself, which by Thee was created good and right, is now put for the vice and infirmity of corrupt nature ; because the motion thereof, left to itself, draws to evil and to things below. For the little strength which remains is but like a spark hidden in the ashes. This is our natural reason, which is surrounded with a great mist, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and of the distance of truth and falsehood " (*Imitation of Christ* Bk. III. ch. lv.).

For were we to go forth in darkness out of the prison-house of the body and from the shadow of death, our darkness could never more be enlightened. Here is the reason why the only-begotten Son of God, the Sun of justice, has shown Himself amidst the gloom of this place of our banishment as a burning and shining Torch, of large and brilliant flame, in order, namely, that all who desire to be illuminated may approach and be united to Him so closely as to leave nothing intervening between Him and them. For it is our sins that "separate between us and God." Therefore, as soon as these are removed, we are placed in contact with the true Light of the world, to be enlightened by and, as it were, made one with It; just as when we want to light an extinguished taper we touch it to another that is burning and shining, if I may be allowed to illustrate an invisible truth by an example drawn from things visible.

Let us, therefore, my brethren, light for ourselves the lamp of knowledge—as the Prophet speaks *—at this great and luminous Star, before we pass out of the darkness of this world. Otherwise we shall only exchange darkness for denser darkness, the darkness of time for the darkness of eternity. But what is this knowledge which is so necessary for us to possess? It is to know that the Lord will come, even though we cannot ascertain the time of His coming. This, my brethren, is the sum-total of the knowledge required of us. But I may be told that so much knowledge is in the possession of all. "For who," it will be said, "even amongst nominal Christians, is not aware that the

* Osee x. 12 (according to the Septuagint Version).—Translator.)

Lord will come,—' that He will come again to judge the living and the dead,' and to ' render to every man according to his works ? ' " I answer by denying that all have this knowledge, or even many. It belongs but to the few, because in truth, it is only the few that shall be saved.* Do you suppose that they " who are glad when they have done evil and rejoice in most wicked things," do you suppose that such persons have the knowledge and the remembrance of the Lord's future coming ? Should they tell you so, believe them not, because, as St. John Evangelist bears witness, " He who saith that he knoweth Him and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar." And, according to St. Paul, " They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him." For " faith without works is dead." Surely if they had a true knowledge and fear of the coming of the Lord they would not defile their souls with all manner of moral filthiness, but would rather keep careful watch and not suffer such violence to be done to their consciences.

Now, the first degree of this knowledge produces penitence and sorrow, changing laughter into tears, song into mourning, joy into grief; insomuch that you begin to have a dislike now for what particularly pleased you before, and what you were wont to seek with the greatest avidity you avoid now with the greatest disgust. For so it is written, " He that addeth knowledge, addeth also sorrow." Hence true and holy knowledge proves its presence by the sorrow it excites. In its second degree, this knowledge produces amendment of life, so that you no longer

* See the Saint's Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, vol. ii. 261-2.—(Translator.)

" yield your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity," but instead you begin to bridle gluttony, to mortify the passion for pleasure, to humble your pride, and to compel your body, which has hitherto been the instrument of sin, to co-operate henceforth unto your sanctification. For repentance without amendment will profit you nothing. Hence the Wise Man says, " When one buildeth up and another pulleth down, what profit have they but the labour ? When one prayeth and another curseth, whose voice will God hear ? He that washeth himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his washing avail ? " Rather he ought to fear " lest some worse thing should happen to " him, as the Saviour gives warning. But because this amendment of life cannot long be sustained, unless the soul keeps watch and ward over herself, with wakeful and unwearying circumscription, she has need of the third degree of knowledge which produces solicitude, so that she may begin to walk carefully with her God, ever and in all things anxiously vigilant, lest she should offend, even in the very least, the eyes of so tremendous a Majesty. Thus, in repentance she is warmed; in amendment she is set on fire ; in solicitude she becomes all luminous and radiant, so that the whole man is renewed within and without.

The soul that attains to this third degree begins at last to enjoy a respite from " the trouble of evils and sorrow," and to temper with spiritual gladness the excess of her fear, lest at the thought of the greatness of her sins, she should " be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Therefore, although she is afraid of the Judge, she has hope in the Saviour. Fear and

joy are now contending and battling for the government of her mind. Nor seldom fear comes off triumphant, but more often the victory rests with joy, which puts fear to rout and shuts it up within its own secret stronghold. Happy the conscience wherein this conflict is being perpetually carried on until " that which is mortal is swallowed up by life," until " that which is perfect"—namely, joy—reigns alone and " that which is in part, viz., fear—shall be done away." For it is not fear that shall endure for ever, but only joy. Nevertheless, although such a soul is now burning and shining, let her not imagine herself to be at home in the shelter of her own house, where a lighted torch may be carried about without any fear of draughts. Let her remember that she is still out under the open sky, consequently, that she must be careful to protect with her two hands the flame of her candle, and not to trust it to the air, even when it appears most tranquil. For on a sudden, and at a moment when she is not suspecting, it will change its mood : then, if the sheltering hand has been withdrawn, although but for an instant, the light shall be promptly extinguished. And even if (as sometimes happens) the light of the candle begins to burn the hand that protects it, let her rather choose to suffer the pain than to withdraw the shelter, for otherwise, " in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the flame shall be blown out. Were we at home, in that " house not made with hands, eternal in heaven," to which no enemy gains admission, and from which no friend departs, then, my brethren, we should have nothing to fear. But so long as we live here below, we are exposed to three winds of the greatest power and malignity, namely: the world, the

flesh, and the devil, which endeavour to extinguish the light of our conscience by blowing in upon our hearts evil desires and illicit motions, and suddenly bewildering us in such a manner that one can scarcely tell " whence he cometh or whither he goeth." Two of these spiritual winds sometimes cease from troubling us, but the third never makes a truce with anyone. Consequently, we must employ both our hands, and the hands of our souls rather than those of our body, to protect our consciences, lest perchance the light which has been kindled in them should be lost. We must not yield, we must not give way, even though the violent heat of temptation is furiously burning us in both our spiritual and material parts. But we must say with the Psalmist, " My soul is continually in my hands." Let us endure the fire rather than surrender. And as we do not easily forget what we hold in our hands, so we should never lose sight of the interests of our souls, and our spiritual concerns ought to hold the first place in our hearts.

When, therefore, our loins have been thus girded and our lamps thus lighted, we must begin to keep the " night-watches " over the flocks of our thoughts and actions, so that if the Lord shall come at the first watch, or at the second watch, or at the third, He shall always find us ready. The first of these night-watches, my brethren, is regularity in your exterior conduct, so that you endeavour to conform your whole life to the Rule you have sworn to observe, and do not transgress the bounds which our fathers have set in all the exercises of this way and life, declining neither to the right hand nor to the left. The second is purity of intention, so that the eye being simple

may render the whole body lightsome. Thus, all that you do now is done purely for the glory of God, and "unto the place from whence the rivers (of grace) come they return to flow again." The third night-watch is zeal for the preservation of concord and unity. And thou keepest this when, placed in the community, thou givest the will of each of thy brethren the preference over thine own,* so that thou conversest amongst them not alone without blame, but with the kindliness of charity, supporting all and praying for all, in such a manner as to deserve to have applied to thee what Onias said of the Prophet, "This is a lover of his brethren and of all the people of Israel: this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the holy city." It is thus, my brethren, that on this day the advent of the Only-Begotten enkindles for us the light of true knowledge: I mean the knowledge by which we know that the Lord will come, which is, the firm and enduring foundation of our spiritual life.

"And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord." O most desirable morning! O day in the courts of the Lord that is "better above thousands," wherein for ever month shall succeed to month and sabbath to sabbath, whilst the splendour of light and the fervour of charity shall unfold and illumine the loftiest mysteries of God for the contemplation of the blessed! Oh, who shall presume—I do not say, to describe—but even to imagine thy glories? Yet, in the meantime, my brethren, let us strengthen our faith, in order that, if we cannot behold the wonders which are reserved for the life to come, we may at

* "The brethren shall obey not only the abbot, but also one another; for it is by this way they are to reach the kingdom of heaven" (Holy Rule of St. Benedict, ch. lxxi.).

least contemplate something of the marvels accomplished for us on earth. In assuming our flesh the Majesty of God by an exercise of omnipotence wrought three works, effected three unions, so uniquely wonderful and so wonderfully unique, that nothing like them has ever yet been done upon the earth or shall be done hereafter. For the Divine Nature was united to the human, virginity to motherhood, and faith to the heart of man. Very admirable in truth is each of these unions, and more marvellous than any miracle: how elements so heterogeneous and, in a sense, so opposed, could be brought together and made to combine.

And consider first of all the creation of the universe, and the disposition and ordering of its various parts. What a display of power in the production of a world out of nothingness! What wisdom in the collocation of the different orders of creatures! What benignity in their manifold combination! Reflect on the multitude and magnitude of the things created by almighty power, how wisely they are all distributed, with how much goodness they have been compounded, the highest being united to the lowest, with a charity as amiable as it is admirable. For to this slime of the earth has been added the vital force, as for instance, in the trees where its presence is manifested in the beauty of the foliage, in the brilliancy of the flowers, and in the sweetness and wholesomeness of the fruit. Not content with thus ennobling our common clay, the Creator has further endowed it with the principle of sentiency in the brute beasts, which are not only gifted with life but also possess a fivefold faculty of perception. And He has stopped not even at this, but in order to

honour the material element still more, He has associated with it the rational soul in the case of man, who, in addition to life and sensibility, is invested with the power of discriminating between what is helpful and what is harmful, between good and evil, between truth and falsity. Lastly, the Divine Majesty, wishing to elevate matter to a yet higher glory, contracted His own immensity and gave Himself—the greatest gift in His power to bestow—to be united to our earthy substance, so that in the unity of a single Person should be wedded together God and matter, Majesty and weakness, infinite Sublimity and utter abjection. For there is nothing more sublime than the Divinity and nothing more abject than clay. And nevertheless with so much condescension has God lowered Himself to the level of matter, with so much honour has matter been raised to the level of God, that by an ineffable and incomprehensible mystery, whatever God has done in it, matter may be said to have done, and whatever matter has suffered in Him, God may be said to have suffered. * But observe here

* This is the doctrine of the "communication of idioms," according to which it is lawful to attribute to Christ as man what belongs to Him only as He is God, and *vice versa*. Thus we may say that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was crucified, that the Author of life was slain, that Mary's Son created the world, etc. St. Thomas gives the reason (*Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xvi. a. 4), "Et hujus ratio est quia cum sit eadem hypostasis utriusque naturae, eadem hypostasis supponitur nomine utriusque naturae. Sive ergo dicatur (Christus) homo sive Deus, supponitur hypostasis divinae et humanae naturae. Et ideo de homine dici possunt ea quae sunt divinae naturae tanquam de hypostasi divinae naturae ; et de Deo possunt dici ea quae sunt humanae naturae, tanquam de hypostasi humanae naturae." But in the next article he reminds us that this is not possible when we employ abstract substantives, which do not signify the Person : we may not say, for example, that the *Divinity* suffered or that the *Humanity* of Christ created the

that, just as in the Godhead there is unity of Substance with trinity of Persons, so, in this special composition, we have a trinity of substances, with a unity of Person. And as in the former case, neither the plurality of Persons prejudices the unity of Substance, nor does the unity of Substance exclude the distinction of the Persons ; so likewise in the latter, neither the unity of the Person confounds the distinction of the substances, nor does the plurality of the substances destroy the unity of the Person. My brethren, the Divine and Sovereign Trinity has exhibited to us this inferior trinity as the most wonderful thing in creation, as a work singular amongst all and over all the multitudinous works of God. For here the Word, the soul, and human flesh are united in the unity of a single Person. These three are One, and this One is three, not by any confusion of the substances, but by the unity of the Person of the Word. This is the first and most excellent union, it is the first amongst the three unions to which I have referred. Remember, O man, that thou art but dust, and be not proud ; remember also that thou art made one with God and be not ungrateful.

The second union is the truly singular and admirable alliance of virginity with motherhood. "From the beginning of the world it hath not been heard" that one who brought forth remained still a virgin, or that one who remained a virgin brought forth. According to the ordinary course of nature, virginity is never found co-existent with fecundity, nor is there any room for fecundity where virginity is preserved intact. Mary

world, because such terms express only the nature, whereas it is true to say that God suffered and died, and that the Man Christ created the world. Cf. Hurter, vol. ii. p. 423.—(Translator.)

is the only woman in whom integrity and motherhood have met together. In her was once accomplished what had never been done before nor shall be done hereafter, for it is of her the Poet sings,

> "Whose like had ne'er been seen before,
> Nor shall appear for evermore."—(Sedulius).

The third union is that of faith with the human heart. This, although inferior in dignity, both to the first and to the second, is yet perhaps their equal in strength. For it is very extraordinary, how the heart of man yields the assent of faith to those two mysteries, how it can believe that God has become man, and that Mary has remained a virgin after child-birth. Just as iron and clay cannot be welded together, so it is equally impossible to conjoin so mighty a force of faith with the weakness and inconstancy of the human heart, without the solder of the Holy Spirit. Are we then to believe that He Who is laid in the manger, Who weeps in the cradle, Who suffers all the miseries and pains incidental to childhood, Who is scourged, Who is spat upon, Who is crucified, Who is placed in the sepulchre and confined between two stones—are we to believe Him to be God, God immense and majestic? And with regard to Mary, how can we believe in the virginity of her whom we behold suckling her Babe, who lives with her husband and is always at his side, accompanying him in his long journey to Egypt and back again to Nazareth? How can the human race, how can the whole world be induced to credit this? Nevertheless, these truths have won acceptance, and that with so much power and facility that the very multitude of

those who believe in them makes them credible to me. Yea, "young men and maidens, the old with the younger," have chosen to die a thousand deaths rather than renounce this faith for a moment.

This third union is indeed very excellent, but still more excellent is the second, and most excellent of all is the first. "Ear hath heard" of the first, although "eye hath not seen" it. For that "great mystery of godliness" has been heard and believed even to the ends of the earth. But "eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee," how Thou hast united Thyself to a human body within the narrow limits of a virgin's womb. "Eye hath seen" the second union, because that glorious Queen who "kept all these words pondering them in her heart," saw herself at one and the same time a mother and a virgin. And Joseph also was no less the witness than the guardian of his consort's integrity. The third "hath entered into the heart of man," when what was accomplished was believed as it had been accomplished, when more credit was given to the oracle of heaven than to the human eye, when men believed firmly, nothing doubting, the things that were said or done. Therefore, in the first of these three unions, thou mayest perceive what God has bestowed upon thee, in the second by what intermediary He has bestowed it, and in the third for what purpose. He has given thee Christ, through Mary, for thy salvation. Hence the first union contains the remedy: it is a poultice, so to speak, made up of the Divine Nature and the human, and intended for the cure of thy infirmities. These two elements have been ground and mixed in the mortar of the Virgin's bosom; the Holy Spirit, as the pestle, sweetly blending them

together. But since thou wert unworthy to receive so great a gift directly from the Lord, it was given to Mary, so that thou mightest receive through her hands whatever of good was destined for thee—through her hands, I say, who by her motherhood has for thee given birth to God, and because she was a virgin has been " heard for (her) reverence," when pleading thy cause and the cause of the whole human race. Were she a mother alone, it would be enough for her to " be saved through childbearing," as the Apostle speaks; and were she a virgin alone, she would be sufficient for herself indeed, but there would be no fruit of her womb to be pronounced blessed, or to become the world's ransom. Therefore, whilst the first union contains the remedy, it is only in the second that we enjoy the benefit of that remedy, because it is the will of God that we should have nothing which has not passed through the hands of Mary. In the third of these unions we find merit, for it is accounted merit to us when we believe firmly in the two preceding; and there is salvation in faith, as the Lord assures us, where He says, " He that believeth shall be saved." Amen.

FOURTH SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the Spiritual Riches which Christ brought on Earth.

"*Length of days is in* (*His*) *right hand and in* (*His*) *left hand riches and glory.*"—Prov. iii. 16.

The custom of our Order, my brethren, does not require that there should be a sermon to-day. But considering that on to-morrow we shall be occupied so long in the celebration of Masses that the time left over will be too short for a discourse of the usual length, I have thought it advisable to prepare your hearts now for so great a solemnity; especially because this mystery is so unfathomably profound, so absolutely incomprehensible, that like a never-failing fountain, it can be exhausted by no prodigality, but the more it communicates, the more it has to give. I know well, my dear children, how great is the tribulation you are enduring for the love of Christ, and I pray God that your consolation in Him may be equally abundant. As for earthly comforts, I have neither the wish nor the right to offer you anything of that sort. Such consolation is vile, and can serve no useful purpose; and what is more to be feared, it is often a hindrance to true and salutary consolation. And so, in order that we may possess this desirable consolation and repudiate the false, He Who is the everlasting crown and delight of the angels has become Himself the salvation and consolation of the miserable; He, Who

as a mighty and noble Monarch fills His subjects with happiness in His kingdom beyond the stars, greatly rejoices us poor exiles in the place of our banishment by appearing amongst us as little and lowly; He Who is the "Glory of God in the highest" is made "on earth Peace to men of good will." For He is given as a Little One to them who are themselves little, so that being made great by Him, they may receive Him as great, and that whom He justifies now in His littleness, He may afterwards in His Majesty and magnificence exalt and glorify. Hence, no doubt, the Vessel of Election "hath uttered the good word" which he received from the fulness of this Little One—for although little, He is nevertheless full, "full of grace and truth," since "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally"—hence it is, I say, that St. Paul "hath uttered the good word" which you have frequently heard during these days: "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice." That is, he bids you to rejoice firstly on account of the grace which is given you, and to rejoice secondly on account of the glory which is promised, because both the gift and the hope are alike full of gladness: he bids you to rejoice over the largess which you have received from the Left Hand and to rejoice over the reward which you expect from the Right. For the Spouse in the Canticle says, speaking of the Bridegroom, "His Left Hand is under my head, and His Right shall embrace me." With His Left Hand He supports us, but with His Right He draws us to Himself; with His Left He cures and pardons, but with the Right He caresses and glorifies; His Left Hand holds merit, but in His Right is contained the reward; in His "Right Hand are delights

even to the end," but in His Left are found health and healing.

But observe the loving-kindness, observe the wisdom of this Divine Physician of our souls. Consider carefully how novel are the remedies He brings. Notice that His medicines are not only precious but also beautiful, not alone most useful for restoring to us our health, but at the same time pleasing to the eye and sweet to the palate. Look at His first remedy, the first gift which He bears in His Left Hand. You shall find it to be His virginal conception. Reflect, I pray you, on the nature of this. How strange it is, how admirable, how amiable, how delightful! For what can be more beautiful than "a chaste generation"? What more glorious than a pure and holy conception, free from all stain, from all shame, from all corruption? But because the grandeur of this unique conception, admirable as it is, would not, nevertheless, have been likely to interest me so much if its attractions were not reinforced by the hope of salvation and the consideration of my own utility, therefore was it (the conception) not only made magnificent in its outward show, but also rendered precious in its inward virtue, thus verifying what is written in the Proverbs, "In (His) Left Hand are riches and glory," that is to say, the riches of salvation and the glory of novelty. For "who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed" but He alone Whose conception alone was free from the influence of carnal concupiscence? We, my brethren, have all of us been defiled and infected in our very root and origin: our conception has been sullied. But there is One Who can take away our

shame, He, namely, upon Whom alone this shame has never fallen.

I have, therefore, the riches of salvation, I have the most pure conception of Christ, wherewith I may redeem the impurity of my own. But continue, O Lord Jesus, continue to add new marvels to the old, and to work ever fresh wonders, because the prodigies already wrought have lost, through familiarity, their power to impress us. Miracles undoubtedly, and great miracles, are the rising and the setting of the sun, the fertility of the earth, the succession of the seasons, etc., but they are so constantly before our eyes that they attract no attention.* Therefore, O Lord, renew Thy signs and change Thy prodigies. "Behold," He says, "I make all things new." Who speaks thus? It is the Lamb "That sitteth on the throne," the Lamb of God, all sweetness, all delight, all unction. I say "all unction," for this is the meaning of the name He bears, Christ being the Greek for "anointed." What indeed can there be of harshness or austerity in Him Who even in His nativity, inflicted on His Mother neither pain nor loss? O truly unprecedented

* St. Augustine repeatedly expresses the same thought. Thus (quaest. lxxix.) he says, "Although the miracles which occur in the ordinary course of visible nature are so common and familiar that they attract no attention, yet if one reflects he will recognise that they are really greater than those which happen rarely"; and again (in Joan. 24), "The government of the universe is a greater miracle than the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves; and if the latter appears more wonderful, it is not because it is a mightier manifestation of of power and wisdom, but only because it is more rare." However, such natural processes and phenomena would not be called miracles in the technical sense. For a miracle in this sense the Scholastics require that the fact be "sensible, supernatural, rare, and wrought by divine power." Cf. Hickey, *Summula. Phil. Schol.*, v. ii. p. 181.—(Translator.)

marvels! A Child is conceived without shame and brought forth without sorrow! The curse pronounced upon Eve, is for our Virgin changed into a blessing! For neither pain nor sorrow attended Mary's childbirth. The malediction, I say, has become a benediction, so that now, O happy Mother, as was predicted of thee by Gabriel, "Blessed art thou among women." O happy Virgin, happy in that, alone of all women, thou hast escaped the curse and obtained the blessing; in that thou alone has been delivered from the universal malediction, and freed from the sorrows of motherhood! Nor should it surprise us, my brethren, that *He* at His birth caused His Mother no sorrow, Who came, according to the prediction of the Prophet Isaias, to take away the sorrows of the whole world, because, in truth, "He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." There are two things especially which our human fragility is afraid of, and these are suffering and disgrace. Christ came to deliver us from them both and therefore took them both upon Himself when—to pass over His other afflictions and humiliations—He was condemned to die by the impious, and to die a death of shame. Hence, in order to give us an assurance of His purpose to save us from suffering and ignominy, He began by making His own Mother immune from both, for she conceived without confusion and brought forth without pain.

But the riches of salvation are made still more abounding, the glory increases, fresh wonders are witnessed, new miracles are wrought. Not only is the Child conceived without shame and brought forth without sorrow, but the Mother, too, has preserved her virginity intact. O prodigy unheard of! A Virgin

brings forth and after parturition remains a virgin inviolate; combining maternal fecundity with virginal integrity,

"In whom
The mother's joy enhanced the virgin's bloom." *

Now I can expect with confidence the glory of incorruption promised to my own flesh by Christ when I behold Him preserving incorruption in the flesh of His Mother. For it will not be hard to Him Who caused His Mother to bring forth without prejudice to her virginity, to cause "this corruptible body" to "put on incorruption" in a glorious resurrection.

But the Left Hand holds riches still more abundant and glories still more sublime. Mary is made a mother without losing her virginity and her Child is conceived and born free from every stain of sin. The Mother is preserved from the curse pronounced upon Eve; the Child is immune from that universal condition whereof holy Job has declared, "No one is free from stain, not even the infant who has lived one day upon the earth." Yet behold here an Infant without spot or stain, Who is alone true amongst men, yea, Who is Truth Itself. Behold "the Lamb without blemish," "behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world." For who is better able to destroy our sins than He on Whom sin has never fallen? He Who has never, as I know, been defiled Himself, has doubtless the power to cleanse me from my stains. Let that Hand which alone is clean wipe away the mud which

* "Quae ventre beato
Gaudio matris habens cum virginitatis honore."
Sedulius, *Carm. Pasch.* ii. 37-38.

covers my eyes. Let Him "cast the mote out of (my) eye" Who has no beam in His own. I should rather have said, let Him remove the beam from my eye Whose own eye is dimmed by no smallest speck of dust.*

Certainly, we have now seen the riches of salvation and life: "we have seen His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-Begotten of the Father." Of what Father, do you inquire? Listen to the Angel: "And He shall be called the Son of the Most High." There is no need to explain who the Most High is. But to leave no room for even an unreasonable doubt, the heavenly envoy continues, speaking to the Virgin, "and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Oh, how truly is He called the Holy! Lord, "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption," for He has not permitted His Mother "to see corruption." Miracles are multiplied, riches more abound, treasures are revealed. She who brings forth is a virgin and a mother, He Who is brought forth is God and man. But shall that which is holy be given to dogs? Shall pearls be cast before swine? Surely no. Therefore let our treasure be hidden in the field, let our money be placed in the coffer. Let the virginal conception be concealed under the mantle of the Mother's espousals; let the painless child-birth be veiled behind the Infant's cries and sufferings. Let the legal purification hide the Mother's integrity, and the common circumcision the innocence of the Child. Conceal, O Virgin, conceal, I pray thee, the brightness of this new Sun. Place the

* Cf. Luke vi. 41-42; John ix. 6-7.

Infant in the manger, wrap Him in the swaddling clothes. These swaddling clothes are themselves also a part of our riches. The Saviour's swaddling clothes are to us more precious than any purple. The manger wherein He reposes is in our eyes more glorious than the gilded seats of monarchs. Rich beyond all riches and treasures is the poverty of Christ. For what can be richer, what can be found more precious than Christian humility, wherewith the kingdom of heaven may be purchased and the grace of God acquired? Hence it is written, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and the Apostle St. James tells us that "God resisteth the proud and giveth His grace to the humble." But here in the nativity we have the virtue of humility commended to us by the example of God Himself. For it was in humility that "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man."

Do you wish, my brethren, to find riches still more precious, and a glory more excellent still? Then consider the charity of Christ as revealed in His passion. As He declares Himself, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Here indeed are our riches and our glory, the Precious Blood by Which we have been redeemed, and the cross of the Lord wherein we glory with St. Paul, saying like him, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." It was the same Apostle who said, "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." This is the Left Hand of God, namely, "Jesus Christ and the Same crucified." The Right Hand is Jesus

Christ and the Same glorified. "Jesus Christ," says the great Apostle, "and Him crucified." Perhaps, my brethren, we ourselves are this cross on which Christ is affirmed to be crucified. For the very figure of our body represents the cross, as will more evidently appear if you extend your arms. In one of the psalms Christ says of Himself, "I am fixed in the slime of the deep." Now it is manifest that we are slime, because from the slime of the earth we were fashioned. Originally, as you know, we were the slime of paradise, but now we are the slime of the deep. "I am fixed," says the Saviour, "I have not passed over, I have not gone back. I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." For He is Emmanuel, that is to say, "God with us." He abides with us on earth, but by His Left Hand. Thus of old, when Thamar was about to be delivered of twins, Zara first put forth a single hand, which the midwife tied with a scarlet thread to symbolise the mystery of the Lord's passion.*

Therefore we hold the Left Hand already. But it is still necessary for us to cry with Job, "To the work of Thy Hands reach out Thy Right Hand," because "in Thy Right Hand are delights even to the end." O Lord, extend Thy Right Hand "and it is enough for us." "Glory and wealth," sings the Psalmist, "shall be in his house," that is, in the house of him who fears the Lord. But what, O Lord, shall be in Thine own house? Thanksgiving, surely, and the voice of praise. For so the Royal Prophet says, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever." And according to the

* Cf. Genesis xxxviii. 27-30.

Apostle, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it ascended (ascendit) into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." These things, my brethren, are the "light inaccessible," and the "peace that surpasseth all understanding," and the fountain whose waters love to descend and never rise above their source. For "eye hath not seen" the "light inaccessible," "nor ear heard" that peace incomprehensible. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace!" But although "their sound hath gone forth into all the earth," yet how great is that "peace which surpasseth all understanding" the preachers themselves are unable to comprehend, not to speak of conveying it to the minds of their hearers. For attend to the words of St. Paul: "Brethren," he says, "I do not count myself to have apprehended." And he tells us in another place that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." But faith is not sight, nor is the promise of peace the bestowal thereof. True, even now there is "peace on earth to men of good will." Yet what is that peace compared to the fulness and excellence of the peace which awaits us in heaven? Hence the Lord says, speaking to His apostles, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," which may be paraphrased thus: "You are not as yet capable of receiving My peace which surpasseth all understanding, and is a peace above peace. Therefore I give you now in promise the kingdom of peace, and leave you in the meanwhile the way of peace."

But what means the expression, "neither hath it *ascended* into the heart of man"? The Apostle doubt-

less designs to teach us by these words that the peace of heaven resembles the stream of a fountain which knows not how to ascend. For you are not ignorant that it is the nature of flowing water to follow the slope of the valleys and to pour itself down from the mountain heights. Hence it is written, "Thou sendest forth springs in the vales, between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass." This is the reason, my brethren, why I am so often solicitous to remind your charity that "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." For the waters of a fountain never rise above the level of their source.* But according to this rule it may appear to you that pride can be no obstacle to the currents of grace, especially because that first proud creature who, according to holy Job, "is king over all the children of pride," is not represented to have said, "I will be *higher* than the Most High," but "I will be like the Most High." Nevertheless the Apostle does not lie when he affirms of Satan that he "is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped." The human ear is horrified at such blasphemous language. But would to God the wicked thought and feeling it expresses were equally an object of horror to the human heart! For I say to you that not Lucifer alone but every other proud being as well, "is lifted above all that is called God or worshipped." And I will prove this. The Creator requires that His will shall be done, and the proud

* Here, as often elsewhere, the Saint leaves the application of the metaphor to the intelligence of his hearers. What he is insinuating in this passage is obvious enough: the stream of grace cannot rise above its source, and since it has its source in the humble Heart of Jesus, therefore it cannot be communicated to the proud and high-minded.—(Translator.)

creature wants his own will done. So far there is the appearance of equality. But observe now how great is the difference. For God wants His will to be done only in those things which reason approves, whereas the proud creature insists on having his way with or without reason. You perceive how he thus makes a mountain of himself up the steepness of which the waters of grace cannot flow. Hence the Saviour tells us, "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child,* he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven." The little Child He presents to us as our Model is none other than Himself, Who is the Well-Spring of life, in Whom dwells and from Whom proceeds the fulness of all graces. Therefore make ready the channels in which grace may flow, level down the heights of proud and earthly thoughts, conform yourselves to the Son of man, not to the first father of men, because the stream of grace ascendeth not into the heart of man, that is to say, into the uplifted heart of the carnal and earthly minded. Cleanse your eyes also, that you may be able to gaze upon that light of infinite purity, and incline your ears to obedience, that you may sometime attain to that everlasting repose and to that peace above all peace. The happiness of heaven is called light because of its purity, peace because of its tranquillity, a fountain because of its eternity and abundance. We may

* There is a tradition that this child was St. Martial, who later became a disciple of St. Peter and preached the Gospel in Gaul. Another account identifies him with St. Ignatius, the illustrious Bishop of Antioch, martyred in the year 107. St. Bernard's interpretation is purely accommodative. Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. in Matth.* xviii. 2.—(Translator.)

assign the fountain to the Father, from Whom the Son is born and the Holy Ghost proceeds; the light to the Son, Who is in truth "the Brightness of Eternal Light" and "the true Light Which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world"; and the peace to the Holy Ghost, Who is said to rest upon the humble and the quiet. But I must not be understood to imply that these attributes are so proper to the individual Persons as not to belong equally to all. For the Father also is Light since the Son is "Light of Light"; and the Son also is Peace, because, as the Apostle tells us, He is "our Peace Who hath made both one"; and the Holy Spirit also is a "Fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting."

But when shall we attain to this Light, to this Peace, to this Fountain? When, O Lord, wilt Thou "fill me with joy with Thy Countenance"? We rejoice in Thee now since Thou, "the Orient from on high, hath visited us." We rejoice also "looking for the blessed hope" of Thy second coming. But when shall we be given the fulness of joy, not in promise, but in fact? When shall we rejoice not in the hope but in the possession of that plenitude? "Let your modesty be known to all men," says the Apostle, "the Lord is nigh." It is indeed only right that our modesty should become known, just as the modesty of the Lord our God has been made manifest to all. For what could be more incongruous than that men should behave with arrogance, though conscious of their own infirmity, and after beholding the Lord of Majesty living a modest life amongst them? "Learn of Me," He says, "because I am meek and humble of heart, and thus *your* modesty also shall

become known to all men." But as regards the words which follow in the passage from St. Paul, namely, "The Lord is nigh," it is necessary to understand them of the Right Hand. For with reference to the Left Hand the Lord Himself has said, "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." "The Lord is nigh," my brethren. Therefore "be nothing solicitous." He is already at hand and will presently appear. Do not lose courage, do not grow weary. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart"; "the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." And do you wish to know how near He is? Then listen to the Spouse in the Canticle where she sings of her Beloved: "Behold He standeth behind our wall." By this wall we are to understand our mortal body which intervenes as an obstacle during the present life, and hinders us from seeing Him Who standeth behind.* Therefore the Apostle desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ, exclaiming in his wretchedness, "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the Psalmist gives expression to the same desire where he sings, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy name."

* Cf. Sermon LVI on the Canticle of Canticles.—(Translator.)

FIFTH SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the Manner in which we must prepare and sanctify ourselves for the Vision of God.

"Sanctify yourselves to-day and be ye prepared, for to-morrow you shall see in you the Majesty of God."—From the Responsory of the Office of Vigils for Christmas Eve.

To-day, my brethren, on the eve of the Lord's nativity, the Church wisely admonishes us to prepare ourselves in all holiness for the celebration of so unspeakable a mystery. For the Holy of Holies is at hand: He is at hand Who has said, "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy." How can that which is holy be given to dogs, or how can pearls be offered to swine, unless the dogs are first converted from their wickedness and the swine cleansed from their foulness, and unless they are resolved for the future to shun with all solicitude, the former the vomit, the latter the slough? Of old, when the carnal Israelites were about to receive the commandments of God, they sanctified themselves with the justifications of the flesh, with various ablutions, with gifts and sacrifices, none of which things had the power of purifying the conscience of him who performed them. But now all these rites and ceremonies have passed away, because they were only given to be observed until the time of interior justification by the grace of redemption, which time, as you know, has already come. Rightly therefore has perfect holiness been from that moment expected and demanded of us, rightly has

purification of the conscience been enjoined and spiritual cleanliness exacted. For the Lord Himself has said, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." For this we live, my brethren, for this we have been born, for this we have been called, for this it has been granted us to see the sun to-day. It was night in times past when no man was able to do these things. It was night all over the world before the dawn of the true Light, before the birth of the Saviour. It was also night for each one of us before his conversion to God and his spiritual regeneration.

Shall it be questioned that a most profound night and densest darkness covered the whole face of the earth, when our fathers of old worshipped gods made with hands, and with a sacrilegious madness fell down in adoration before stocks and stones? And with regard to each of ourselves, was it not gloomy night whilst we were "living without God in this world," whilst we were "going after our lusts," whilst we were consenting to our carnal inclinations, whilst we were obeying "worldly desires," whilst we were yielding our "members as instruments of iniquity unto sin," whilst we were "serving uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity," "of which we are now ashamed" as of the works of darkness? Hence the Apostle says, "They that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that are drunk are drunk in the night." Such have we been, my brethren; but we have been awakened and sanctified, if yet we be the sons of light and day rather than of night and of darkness. For he is the herald of day who cries out to us, "Be sober and watch." And to the Jews the same Apostle (St. Peter) said on the feast of Pentecost, speaking of his fellow-disciples, "These

are not drunk as you suppose, seeing that it is but the third hour of the day." This is also the burden of his brother-apostle, St. Paul, where he says, "The night is passed and the day is as hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light." "Let us cast off the works of darkness," such as drowsiness and drunkenness—since, as you have just heard, "they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night," —and, as being now in the day, let us not slumber but "walk," and let us "walk honestly," not with the staggering steps of the wine-bibber. Do you see a man whose "soul slumbereth through heaviness" with regard to every good work? Such a one "is in darkness even until now." Do you see a man "inebriated with wormwood," "more wise than it behoveth to be wise," and not "wise unto sobriety," whose "eye is not filled with seeing, neither is his ear filled with hearing," who, loving money or something similar, longs for it with a desire as insatiable as the thirst of a dropsical patient? He is the son of night and darkness. These two evils of sloth and inordinate desire are not easy to separate. Hence it is said in Holy Scripture that "the idle man is full of desires"; * that is to say every sluggard is given to intemperance. Let us therefore sanctify ourselves to-day, and let us be prepared. Let us prepare ourselves to-day by shaking off the drowsiness which belongs to the night; and let us sanctify ourselves as in the day, and cleanse ourselves from nocturnal excesses, restraining the impetuosity of wicked desires. In other words, let us avoid

* The text most nearly resembling this in the Vulgate is Proverbs xxi. 25: "Desires kill the slothful man."—(Translator.)

evil and do good, because "on these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets."

But it is only for to-day we shall be thus employed. To-morrow we shall spend neither in sanctifying ourselves, nor in preparing ourselves, but in contemplating the Divine Majesty. For so sings the Church in her office, "To-morrow you shall see in you the Majesty of God." This is the same as what the Patriarch Jacob said of old, "My justice shall answer for me to-morrow." To-day we cultivate justice, to-morrow it will respond to our labours. It is exercised to-day, it will bear fruit to-morrow. For no man shall reap what he has not sown. So he who now neglects internal holiness shall not be admitted hereafter to the contemplation of Majesty; the Sun of glory shall never shine on him on whom the Sun of justice has not risen; nor shall he see the dawn of to-morrow who has not lived in the light of to-day. For, as the Apostle teaches, the same Christ, "Who of God is made unto us Justice" to-day, shall appear as our Life to-morrow, when we "also shall appear with Him in glory." To-day He is born for us as a Little One, "that man may no more presume to magnify himself upon earth," but that we may rather "be converted and become as little children." But to-morrow He will show Himself to us as the "great Lord and greatly to be praised," so that we also shall be magnified in glory when "every man shall have praise from God." For those whom He justifies to-day, He will magnify to-morrow, and to the consummation of holiness shall succeed the vision of Majesty. Neither is that an unprofitable vision which constitutes a resemblance to the Godhead. For "we shall be like to Him, *because* we

shall see Him as He is." Hence in our text also it is not said simply, " you shall see the Majesty of God," but, " you shall see *in you* the Majesty of God." That is : to-day, when He appears in our human nature, we see ourselves in Him as in a mirror ; but to-morrow we shall see Him in ourselves, when He will clothe us with His own Divinity, when He will unveil to us His Countenance, when He will take us to Himself. This is the promise He has made to those who watch for His coming, " that He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat and passing will minister to them." Meantime, we all receive of His fulness, not yet indeed glory for glory, but only " grace for grace." But it is written, " The Lord will give grace and glory." Despise not, therefore, the foregoing gifts if you wish to obtain the following. Do not disdain the food which is first served if you would partake of that which comes after. Even for the sake of the dish which contains it, refuse not the meat that is offered. For our Divine Peace-Maker has fashioned for Himself an incorruptible dish, " fitting " to Himself an incorruptible Body, and in this most precious dish He ministers to us the food of salvation. " Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One," sings the Psalmist, " to see corruption." And it is of the Same the Angel Gabriel says to Mary, " The Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Therefore, let us be sanctified to-day by this Holy One, in order that we may see His Majesty in us when that future day shall dawn. For the day of sanctification has already shone upon us, and the day of salvation, but not yet the day of glory and of bliss. It is only proper that so long as the passion of the

Holy One (Who suffered on the Parasceve, that is, on the day of preparation) is still announced, it should be said to all, "Sanctify yourselves to-day and be prepared. Sanctify yourselves more and more, by advancing from virtue to virtue, and prepare yourselves by perseverance in good." But in what things are we to be sanctified? I have read in the Scriptures of Moses, how that the Lord "sanctified him in his faith and meekness." For it is quite as impossible to please men without meekness as to please God without faith. Rightly, then, are we admonished to prepare ourselves in these virtues whereby we shall give satisfaction to God Whose Majesty we are destined to contemplate, and also to each other, so that we may behold that Majesty even in ourselves. For this is the reason why it behoveth us to "provide good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men," namely, in order that we may render ourselves agreeable to our fellow-citizens and brothers-in-arms, as well as to our King.

In the first place, therefore, we must seek after faith, by which, as St. Peter testifies, God purifies our hearts. For "blessed are the clean of heart because they shall see (the Majesty of) God." Abandon thyself, therefore, to God, commit thyself to Him, "cast thy care upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee." Then mayest thou say with confidence, "The Lord is careful for me." But such confidence is unknown to men who love themselves, who are wise in their own conceit, who "seek the things that are their own," and "make provision for the flesh in its concupiscences," who are deaf to the voice which calls out to them, saying, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He hath care of

you." For to believe in one's self is not faith but perfidy, and it is rather diffidence than confidence to trust in one's self. He is truly faithful who neither believes in himself nor hopes in himself, but, like the Prophet, becomes to himself "as a broken vessel," so losing his life in this world that he may preserve it eternally in the next. But it is only humility of heart that can induce the faithful soul not to rely on her own strength, but, abandoning herself, to rest upon the Lord, and thus to "ascend from the desert, flowing with delights, (because) leaning upon her Beloved."

But in order that our sanctification may be perfect, it is also clearly incumbent on us to learn from the Saint of saints the sweetness and kindliness which are necessary in human society. Hence He Himself has said, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." But of him, who has thus made perfect his sanctification; who "is sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy," like God Himself; who is "all things to all men," like the Apostle; who, in a manner, anoints all his brethren with that ointment of gentleness and meekness with which he is himself so saturated, so full, so brimming over that he seems to diffuse it on every side,—why should I not say of such a one that he is "flowing with delights"? Happy the man who by reason of this double preparation of faith and meekness is able to say with the Psalmist, "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready." For he has to-day his "fruit unto sanctification" and to-morrow shall have "the end, life everlasting," because to-morrow he shall see the Majesty of God, in which everlasting life consists, according to the words of Truth Itself, "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only

true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." And "the Lord, the just Judge, will render to (him) in that day," to which no other shall succeed, the "crown of justice." "Then shall he see and abound, and his heart shall wonder and be enlarged." By how much shall his heart be enlarged? By so much as shall enable him to behold in himself the Majesty of God. But do not imagine, my brethren, that I can explain to you in words what that promise means.

"Sanctify yourselves to-day and be prepared." To-morrow you shall see and shall rejoice, and "your joy shall be full." For what capacity is so great that the Majesty of God cannot fill it? Yea, you shall be filled up and to overflowing when the "good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, they shall give into your bosom." And so super-abundant is this reward that it transcends "above measure exceedingly" not only our merits but even our desires. For God is able to accomplish what is beyond our hope and power of understanding. There are, my brethren, three ultimate objects of human desire, namely, the honourable, the useful, and the delectable. These are the goods which we all covet: we all covet all of them, but in varying degrees, for this has more attractions for one and that for another. Thus some men are so given up to pleasure that they have but little regard either for the honourable or the useful. Others, devoting themselves particularly to the pursuit of gain, viz., the useful, pay less attention to the honourable and the pleasurable. Others again make honour their chief or only object of endeavour, looking upon the useful and the delectable with comparative indifference. Now, we do nothing reprehen-

sible in desiring these things, provided we seek them there where alone they can be truly found. But where they are truly found, they are one. For the one Sovereign Good is at once supremely useful, supremely delectable, and supremely honourable. And this is our hope—so far as we can conceive it in the present life—and the promised vision, whereby we shall see in us the Divine Majesty: that God shall be all in all to us, all our pleasure, all our profit, all our honour. Amen.

SIXTH SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.

On the Manner in which each of us should make himself a Bethlehem of Juda, so that Christ may be born in his Soul.

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda."—From the *Martyrology*.

We have heard, my brethren, the announcement, full of sweetness and "worthy of all acceptation," that, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." My very soul has melted at the sound of these words, and my spirit is burning in my bosom, eager with its usual ardour of desire to communicate to you its own joy and exultation. Jesus means Saviour. What is so necessary to the lost as a saviour? What so welcome to the miserable? To the despairing what so useful? For where could we find salvation, where was there for us the faintest hope of salvation under "the law of sin," in "the malice of this day," in "the place of affliction," unless it were born to us new and unexpected? Thou perhaps, O my brother, desirest to be restored to health, yet fearest the sharpness of the remedy, conscious of the desperate nature of thy disease and of the tenderness of thy flesh. But take courage. Christ is truly a Physician "sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy," because He it is Who has been "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," above those, that is to say, who have received of the fulness of His anointing, although not the fulness itself. But

lest thou shouldst imagine, from having heard Him called sweet, that He will not be sufficiently powerful, He is further declared to be the Son of God. For the Son of God is equal to His Father and, like the Father, can do whatsoever He wills.

Or perhaps, on being told about the utility of salvation and the sweetness of the saving unction, thou mayest still feel unsatisfied, anxious, let me suppose, concerning Christ's fittingness to be thy Saviour. As the paralytic lying on his bed, or as the poor man left half-dead on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, thou art glad to see the Saviour beside thee. Thy gladness increases on discovering that He is not a harsh Physician and uses no bitter remedies, for otherwise the short-lived pain of the cure might appear to thee more intolerable than the continuance of the malady. It is thus, my brethren, it is thus that many even in our own time foolishly flee away from their Physician and miserably perish, because although they know Jesus, they know not Christ,* and so, after the manner of men, estimate the sharpness of the remedies prepared for them from the multitude and malignity of their maladies. But now, if thou art certain as to the presence of the Saviour, and knowest Him to be Christ, Who makes use not of cauterants but of unguents, and heals by anointing rather than by burning, —if thou art certain of this much, there remains still, as I imagine, one more doubt which might possibly trouble a creature of noble origin, lest perchance the Person

* That is to say, they know that the Incarnate Word has the power to save them, since His name is Jesus, which means Saviour ; but they fear He will be harsh with them, forgetting that He is also called Christ, or the Anointed. Cf. Sermon XXXVIII on the Canticle of Canticles.—(Translator.)

of the Saviour should seem not sufficiently worthy of thee. God forbid that any such thought should ever enter thy mind. But at all events, I do not suppose that thou hast so great an ambition and passion for glory, and art so desirous of honour, as that thou wouldst disdain to receive this grace of salvation, if it were offered thee by one of thy fellow-mortals. And were it offered thee by an angel, or an archangel, or by a saviour belonging to one of the higher angelic orders, thy fastidiousness would have still less reason to complain. As the case is, therefore, thou oughtest to receive the Saviour given thee with a devotion all the greater "as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they," and is called Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And see if the Angel who spoke to the shepherds and announced to them the "good tidings" of great joy, did not more clearly insinuate these three characteristics of our salvation, viz., its utility, its sweetness, and its dignity, when he said, "This day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." Let us, therefore, my brethren, rejoice in this nativity, let us exult with gladness on this festival which the utility of salvation, the sweetness of the unction, and the Majesty of the Son of God so splendidly conspire to commend to us, that nothing is wanting to it of all that our hearts can desire. For it embraces in itself all manner of good, the useful, the delectable, and the honourable. Let us rejoice, I say, revolving in our minds and repeating to each other the sweet words, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda."

And let no undevout soul, no ungrateful and irreligious soul, make answer to this and say to me,

" This is nothing new. These tidings were announced long ages since. What thou hast been speaking of is an event of ancient date. Jesus Christ was born long ago." Yes, long ago and earlier still. This expression, " long ago and earlier still," will not surprise him who recalls the words of Moses, " The Lord shall reign for ever and beyond." Christ, therefore, was born not only before our time, but before all time. But this divine nativity " hath made darkness its covert," or perhaps I should rather say that it " dwelleth in light inaccessible." It lies concealed in the Bosom of the Father, as in a dark and mist-covered mountain. In order, therefore, that this, His eternal birth, might become known to us in some degree, He willed to have also a temporal generation. He was born in time of the flesh, and born in the flesh : for " the Word was made flesh." Yet it should be nothing surprising that even to this day the Church still announces, " Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda," since of the Same, long before His birth, it was said by the Prophet, " A Child is born to us." Long ago these tidings began to be heard and none of the saints has ever wearied of listening. For " Jesus Christ (is) yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever." Hence the first man, Adam, the father of all the living, when proclaiming that great mystery, which the Apostle afterwards more clearly enunciated in reference to Christ and His Church, said, " Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." Hence Abraham also, the father of all the faithful, " rejoiced that he might see (this) day : he saw it and was glad." For why should

he have commanded his servant, when making him "swear by the God of heaven and earth," to "put his hand under his thigh," unless he foresaw that of his seed the same God of heaven and earth was to be born?* God also revealed this secret counsel to the "man according to His own Heart," who said, "The Lord hath sworn truth to David and He will not make it void: of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne." Therefore was Christ born in Bethlehem of Juda, as the Angel testifies, in order that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled and to redeem the promises made to the fathers. For Bethlehem of Juda is the city of David. To the other patriarchs and prophets likewise, "at sundry times and in divers manners," the Lord made the same announcement. Heaven forbid the thought that it was ever received with indifference by those true lovers of God. Do you think Moses was indifferent when he said, "I beseech Thee, Lord, send Whom Thou wilt send"? Or the Prophet Isaias, when he exclaimed, "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down," and made use of many other similar expressions? But "that which was from the beginning" the holy apostles heard and saw "and handled with their hands of the Word of life," for to them in particular it was said, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see." Finally, for us also, the faithful children of the Church, the same blessedness has been preserved, sealed up, so to speak, in the treasury of faith, according to the words of Christ Himself, "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." This, my brethren, is our portion

* Cf. Genesis xxiv. 2-3.

in the Word of life. And assuredly it is nothing contemptible, since it communicates to us spiritual life and gives us the victory over the world. For it is written, "the just man liveth by faith," and "this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." Faith may be regarded as an image of eternity, comprehending, as it does, in its most ample bosom, all things past, present, and to come, so that nothing escapes it, nothing is lost to it, nothing lies beyond its range.

With good reason, therefore, did your hearts leap for joy, when the voice of this announcement sounded in your ears; with good reason did you return thanks to God and prostrate yourselves on the floor in humble adoration,* lying together "under the shadow of His shoulders" and "hoping under His wings." Did not every one of you, on hearing the good tidings of the Saviour's nativity, repeat in his heart the words of the psalm, "It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God"? Or rather these other words of the same Prophet, "Be thou, O my soul, subject to God"? But unhappy he,—if there be any such,—whose prostration has been an act of hypocrisy, whose heart was elated whilst his body was humbled. For as we read in Ecclesiastes, "There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit." Whosoever does not consider well his own necessities, whosoever does not feel his own defects, does not tremble at the dangers which surround him, does not devoutly run for help to the

* This custom still survives in the Cistercian Order. On Christmas Eve, when the religious who sings the martyrology in chapter announces the Feast of the Nativity, the whole community prostrate on the floor whilst they recite a Pater and Ave.—(Translator.)

new-born Saviour, does not lovingly subject himself to God, nor gratefully sing with the Psalmist, "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge"; such a man's adoration is not acceptable, his prostration is not sincere, his humiliation has no value, his faith can give him neither victory nor life. Yet wherefore is it said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed"? For surely to believe in Christ is, at least in some sense, to see Him? But consider carefully when and to whom these words were spoken. They were addressed to the Apostle Thomas whom the Lord was reproving for that he believed only because he had seen. But it is not the same thing to see and therefore to believe as to see by believing. For with respect to our father Abraham, how can he be said to have seen the day of the Lord except by believing? And how also are we to understand those other words which we sang in the office of last night, "Sanctify yourselves to-day and be prepared, for to-morrow you shall see in you the Majesty of God"—how, I ask, is this to be understood, if it is not true that we see with our souls whenever with devout affection and "faith unfeigned" we represent and recall to our minds that great "mystery of godliness which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the spirit, appeared unto angels, hath been preached unto the gentiles, is believed in the world, is taken up in glory"?

That, my brethren, is always new which always renovates the mind. That is never old which never ceases to fructify, which no length of time can rob of its freshness. Such is this Holy One Whom God will not "give to see corruption." He is the new Man Who is incapable of ever becoming old, and Who confers true

newness of life even upon those whose "bones have all grown old," as the Psalmist says. Hence it is that in to-day's most sweet announcement, we are not told, as you may have noticed, that He *was* born, but that He *is* born, that "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem of Juda." For just as He is still daily immolated in a mystical manner whilst we "show forth His death" upon the altar, so also does He seem to be newly born whilst we annually commemorate His nativity. To-morrow, therefore, we shall see the Majesty of God, not indeed in Himself but in us. We shall see Majesty in humility, Power in weakness, God in man. For He is Emmanuel, "which, being interpreted, is God with us." But listen to a more evident testimony: "The Word was made flesh," writes St. John, "and dwelt among us." Then and thereafter "we saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It was not the glory of divine power and Majesty that we saw, but the glory of the Father's love, the glory of His grace, whereof the Apostle says, "Unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son."

Thus, therefore, is He born. But born where? "In Bethlehem of Juda." We must not, my brethren, pass over Bethlehem, for the shepherds did not say, "Let us *pass over* Bethlehem," but, "Let us pass over *to* Bethlehem." What though it be but a poor insignificant village? What though it seems to be but "a little one among the thousands of Juda"? For such a birth-place is not unbefitting for Him Who, whereas He was rich, became poor for our sakes; Who, although He was "the great Lord and greatly to be

praised," was born for us as a Little One; Who said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and, "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Therefore did He choose the stable and the manger, a house of clay and the shelter of beasts, in order to teach us that it is He Who "lifteth up the poor out of the dunghill," and "preserveth men and beasts."

Would to God that we also were each of us found to be a Bethlehem of Juda, so that Christ might condescend to be born in us, and that we might deserve to hear addressed to us the words, "Unto you that fear My name the Sun of justice shall arise"! And perhaps it is the same thing to say that a man must make himself a Bethlehem of Juda if he would have Jesus to be born in his heart, as what I remember to have remarked awhile ago, namely, that there is need of sanctification and preparation before we can see in us the Majesty of God. For, according to the Royal Prophet, "Judea is made His sanctification," because, namely, all sins are washed away by confession; * and Bethlehem signifies the "house of bread," which seems to be suggestive of preparation. How indeed is he prepared to receive and entertain so noble a Guest, who is obliged to say, "In my house there is no bread"? So we read of a certain man who, because he was thus unprepared, had to go at midnight to a neighbour's house and to knock at the closed door, saying, "A friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him." † "His heart

* The word Judea or Juda means confession, as has been remarked in a preceding discourse.—(Translator.)

† Luke xi. 5-6.

is prepared to hope in the Lord," says the Psalmist, speaking no doubt of the just man, "his heart is strengthened, he shall not be moved." But the heart that is not strengthened cannot be prepared. Now we know on the testimony of the same Prophet, that it is bread which "strengtheneth man's heart." Not prepared, therefore, but "withered" and dry is my heart, if "I have forgotten to eat my bread." But "I am prepared and am not troubled, that I may keep the commandments" of life, if "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching myself forth to those that are before, I press towards the mark." You observe, my brethren, that there is one kind of forgetfulness which is to be wished for, and another which we ought to avoid. For the whole tribe of Manasses * did not cross over the Jordan, nor did the whole tribe choose to remain on the hither side. There are some who forget the Lord their Creator, and there are some who "set Him always in their sight," forgetting their "people and their father's house." The former are oblivious of heavenly things, the latter of earthly; the former of the future, the latter of the present; the former of what is invisible, the latter of that which is seen; the former of "the things of Jesus Christ," the latter of "the things that are their own." Both are Manasses, because both are forgetful: but the one is forgetful of Babylon, the other of Jerusalem. That is to say, the one is forgetful of what it is expedient to forget, and so is prepared; the other, on the contrary, forgets what it is expedient to remember, inexpedient to forget, and he is altogether unprepared

* Cf. Josue xiii.-xvii. The word "Manasses" means oblivion. —(Translator.)

to see in himself the Majesty of God,—he is not a "house of bread" in which the Saviour will condescend to be born, nor is he the Manasses who has the vision of Him That ruleth over Israel and sitteth upon the cherubims, according to the Psalmist, "Thou That rulest Israel, Thou That sittest upon the cherubims, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses." In my opinion these three are the same who, according to the word of God, "shall deliver their souls by their justice," * and are called by the Prophet Ezechiel, Noe, Daniel, and Job. They are also represented, as I think, by the three † shepherds to whom, at the birth of the "Angel of the great counsel," the ministering angel announced great joy.

And consider further if you cannot recognise the same three, to wit, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasses, before whom God "shines forth," in the three Magi, who come now, not from the east alone, but "from the east and from the west" to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." And perhaps it will not seem unreasonable to suppose that to Ephraim (whose name signifies fructification) belongs the oblation of incense. For to "offer worthy incense for an odour of sweetness" is the office of those whom the Lord appointed that they "should go and bring forth fruit," that is, of the prelates of the Church. Benjamin, as being the "son of the right hand," has the duty of offering gold, that is, the substance of this world, in order that the faithful people, placed on the Judge's Right Hand, may deserve to hear, "I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink." And Manasses,

* Cf. Ezechiel xiv. 13-14. † Cf. A Lapide in Luc. ii. 8.

if yet he desires that God should "shine forth" to him, must offer the myrrh of mortification, which, in my judgment, is particularly demanded from persons of our profession. I have said this in order to show that we do not belong to that part of the tribe of Manasses which remained on the hither side of the Jordan, but to the other which, "forgetting the things that are behind," stretches forward with eagerness to attain what lies before.

But now let us return to Bethlehem and let us see this Word Which is made, Which the Lord hath made and will show to us. It is good for us to be there, because Bethlehem, as I have already remarked, is the "house of bread." For where the Word of God is, there must also be the bread which "strengtheneth man's heart." Hence the Psalmist says, "Strengthen me in Thy Word." For man liveth "in the Word Which proceedeth from the Mouth of God," he liveth in Christ and Christ liveth in him. It is in the bread-strengthened heart that Christ is born and reveals Himself. He loves the heart which is strong and stable, not that which is weak and wavering. If any man hesitates, if any man falters, if any man murmurs, if any man purposes to wallow again in the mire, or to go back to the vomit, or to violate his vow, or to abandon his resolution, such a one cannot be called a Bethlehem, he is no "house of bread." It is only famine, and a very severe famine, that compels him to go down into Egypt, to feed the swine there, and to long for the husks which these poor animals eat: because he is far from the house of bread, far from the home of his Father, where, as he knows, even the "hired servants abound with bread." Christ, therefore, will

not be born in such a heart as this, which is wanting in the strength of faith; for faith is the bread of life, as the Prophet Habacuc testifies where he says, "The just man liveth by faith." Hence the Apostle also assures us that so long as we live here below, Christ, Who is the true Life of our souls, "dwelleth by faith in our hearts." How indeed could Jesus be born there, how could salvation be found in the inconstant heart, since the word of the Lord stands firm and fixed, that only "he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved"? And that the man of wavering will has not Christ within him and is not of the number of those to whom it is said, "You have the unction from the Holy One," is manifest from this especially, that his "heart is withered" because (he) forgot to eat (his) bread." Much less can such a one belong to the Son of God, Whose Spirit, as the Prophet Isaias bears witness, will only rest upon "him that is poor and little, and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at (His) words." Besides, there can be no fellowship between eternal fixedness and such mutability, between Him Who is, and him "who never continueth in the same state." Nevertheless, however constant we may be, however strong in faith, however well prepared, however abounding with bread through the mercy of Him to Whom we daily cry, "Give us this day our daily bread": in spite of all this, we still have need to add the petition which follows in the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our trespasses." For "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." He is this Truth, Who is born not simply in Bethlehem, but in Bethlehem of Juda, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Therefore, my brethren, "let us come before (the Lord's) presence with confession," so that being both sanctified and prepared, we also may be found to be, each one of us, a Bethlehem of Juda, and thus may deserve to see the Saviour born in us. But—and this is a matter of much importance for ourselves—if any soul should have made such progress that she is now a fruitful virgin, that she is now a star of the sea, that she is now full of grace and has the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, I believe that He will condescend to be born not only *in* but even *of* such a soul. Yet no one should presume to claim for himself so great a privilege save those whom He has Himself particularly designated and pointed out, as it were, with His finger, where He says, "Behold My mother and My brethren." * And listen to one of these mystical mothers: "My little children," exclaims St. Paul, "of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you." For if Christ seemed to be born in the disciples whilst He was being formed in them, why may I not also presume to say that Christ was born of the Apostle, by whom He was in a manner brought forth in them? It is thou, O impious Synagogue, it is thou that hast brought forth to us this Child, discharging the office of a mother, yet without a mother's affection. Thou didst put Him out of thy womb, didst drive Him

* Compare the following from Faber: "Oh, think of those mighty words in the Gospel: The same is My brother, My sister, and My mother! Only let us do God's will and we are all Maries, and angels will hail us, and Christ will be born of us, and though His cross may cause us seven and seven times seven sorrows, yet at the last He will assume us into heaven and crown us there, doing to us in our measure what He has done to Mary in her measure" (*Life and Letters*, p. 273).—(Translator.)

forth from thy city, and, lifting Him above the earth, didst seem to say to the Church of the gentiles and to the primeval Church, which is in heaven, " Let Him belong neither to you nor to me, but let Him be divided. Let Him be divided not *between* both, but *from* both." For after expelling Him from the city, and raising Him up (so that He might remain neither within thy walls nor upon the earth) thou didst compass Him about with a palisade of iron to prevent His escape on this side or on that. O most cruel mother, how couldst thou have the heart thus to cast forth the Child of thy womb with none to receive or to care Him ? Look now and see how much thou hast gained by thy cruelty, or rather how thou hast gained nothing at all. For everywhere the daughters of Sion are going forth to see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith thou, His mother, hast crowned Him. But He, leaving His mother, hath cleaved to His Bride, and they are two in one flesh. Banished from Jerusalem and lifted up from the earth, He is drawing all things to Himself because He is the Same Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMONS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

FIRST SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

On the Fountains of the Saviour.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains, and you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord and call upon His name."—Isaias xii. 2-3.

Truly great, my dearest brethren, is the festival we keep to-day in honour of the Lord's nativity. But the shortness of the time at our disposal admits of only a short sermon. Nor ought you to be surprised that I shorten my words, seeing that God the Father has to-day shortened * His own Word. Shall I tell you how extended was that Divine Word, and how much He has been contracted? "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord," by His Prophet Jeremias. But now, made flesh, He lies in a narrow manger. Again, the Psalmist says to Him, "From eternity and to eternity Thou art God." And see! He has become as an Infant of a day. Wherefore, brethren, or by what necessity has the Lord of Majesty so humbled Himself, so emptied Himself, so "shortened" Himself, unless it be in order to induce us to do likewise? And thus He now already preaches by His example what He shall later on proclaim with His lips: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." Hence we find it written in the Acts of the Apostles that "Jesus began to do and to teach." I beg of

* Allusion to Romans ix. 28.

you, then, dearest brethren, and most earnestly beseech you not to allow so noble an example to be presented to you without profiting by it, but rather to make it your model and to "be renewed in the spirit of your minds." Be diligent in acquiring humility, which is the foundation and the guardian of the virtues. Cultivate humility, because by it alone can you save your souls. What indeed could be more unworthy, what more detestable, what deserving of severer chastisement than that man should still "presume to magnify himself upon the earth" after seeing the God of heaven making Himself so little? It is intolerable impudence on the part of a wretched little worm to inflate and enlarge itself, when the Lord of glory has voluntarily laid aside His greatness.

This, then, is the reason why He Who "in the form of God" was equal to the Father, yet "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." But He only emptied Himself of His Majesty and His power, not also of His goodness and mercy. For what says the Apostle? "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." Already He had exhibited His power in the creation of the world; His wisdom was constantly revealed in the government of the universe; but His goodness and kindness became especially manifest in His incarnation. His power was made known to the Jews in signs and wonders. Hence in their law we frequently find the words, "I, the Lord," "I, the Lord." The philosophers likewise, "abounding in their own sense," had knowledge of His Majesty, because, as the Apostle bears witness, "That which is known of God is manifest in them." Nevertheless, the Jews were oppressed by the power which they

knew, and the philosophers, becoming "searchers of Majesty," were "overwhelmed by glory." For power demands subjection, Majesty calls for admiration, whilst imitation belongs to neither. Therefore, let Thy goodness, O Lord, appear, to which man, who is made to Thy image, may be conformed. Thy Majesty, Thy power, and Thy wisdom it is not possible for us to imitate, nor is it expedient to emulate. But how long shall Thy mercy confine itself to a part of Thy angelic creation, leaving the rest, along with the whole human race, to be occupied by Thy justice? "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth, viz., Thy justice, reacheth even unto the clouds," condemning all the earth, together with the powers of the air. But let Thy mercy widen its boundaries; let it extend its domain; let it expand its bosom; let it "reach from end to end mightily and dispose all things sweetly." Thou art straitened, O Lord, within the compass of Thy justice; put off Thy girdle and come down to us flowing with mercies, overflowing with charity.

And thou, O man, why art thou fearful? Wherefore dost thou tremble "before the Face of the Lord because He cometh"? For He is coming to save the world, not to judge it. Long ago thou wert induced by a faithless fellow-servant to steal the royal diadem and to place it upon thy head. But thou wert discovered in the act. Good reason hadst thou then to be afraid. Good reason hadst thou then to flee from the Face of the Lord. For perhaps He was already brandishing the flaming sword. Now, however, in a land of exile, thou eatest thy bread in the sweat of thy brow, and behold, a voice is heard on the earth proclaiming the coming of the Lord. Whither shalt

thou go from His Spirit? Or whither shalt thou flee from His Face? But do not fear, do not fly. He comes not now in anger. He seeks thee not for punishment but in order to save thee. And lest on this occasion also thou shouldst say, "I heard Thy voice and I hid myself," behold He has become an Infant, a little speechless Babe. For His wailing cries should rather move thee to compassion than inspire thee with terror: and even if perchance there be some others to whom they are a cause of alarm, surely they are not so to thee. He has made Himself a Little One; His Virgin Mother wraps Him in His poor swaddling clothes: and art thou still fearful and trembling? This alone should convince thee that He comes not to destroy but to save thee, to deliver and not to bind thee, the fact, namely, that He is already fighting against thy foes, that He, as the Power and the Wisdom of God, is already trampling on the necks of the proud and haughty demons.

Thou, O man, hast two enemies, sin and death, that is to say, the death of the soul and the death of the body. Christ is come to conquer both, and from both will He save thee. Only be not afraid. Even already He has vanquished sin in His own Person by taking upon Himself our human nature, free from all defilement. For great violence was done to sin, and it manifestly sustained a heavy defeat, when that very nature which it boasted of having entirely corrupted and completely subdued, was found in Christ wholly reclaimed from it. After this first victory, He "will pursue after (thy) enemies and overtake them, and (He) will not turn back again till they are consumed." Fighting against sin during His mortal existence, He

will oppose it with His words and example; in His passion He will bind it, He will bind "the strong man and plunder his house." Then, as regards death, He will in the same manner and order vanquish it first in Himself, when He rises from the tomb, "the first-fruits of them that sleep," "the First-Begotten of the dead." Afterwards He will overcome it in us also, when He will raise up again our mortal bodies: so shall our enemy, death, be at last destroyed. Therefore will He be "clothed with beauty" at His resurrection, not, as now in His nativity, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Therefore He whose Heart is now brimming over with mercy, Who now judgeth no man, will then, at His rising, gird Himself, and with the cincture of justice will seem to restrain, so to speak, the flowing robes of His mercy. For from that time He shall be prepared for the judgment, which is reserved for our resurrection. And therefore He comes now as a Little One, in order to give mercy the precedence, and that mercy, going before, may temper the severity of the final judgment which must follow.

Yet, although He has come to us now as a Little One, not little but great are the blessings He has brought and bestowed upon us. Would you like to know what these are? Well, in the first place He has brought us mercy, the mercy according to which "He has saved us," as the Apostle testifies. For Christ is for us as a fountain, in which we may wash ourselves clean, as it is written, "Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins." But this is not the only use of water: it can serve us in more ways than by washing out our stains. Thus it can also quench our thirst. "Blessed is the man," says Holy Scripture,

" that shall continue in wisdom, and that shall meditate in his justice," and a little further on, " With the bread of life and understanding she (justice) shall feed him and give him the water of wholesome wisdom to drink." Well does the Holy Spirit describe this wisdom as wholesome, since " the wisdom of the flesh is death," and the wisdom of the world also is " an enemy to God." The only wholesome wisdom is that which comes from God, and which, according to St. James, is " first indeed chaste, then peaceable." But the wisdom of the flesh is impure instead of chaste, and the wisdom of the world is rather contentious than peaceable. The wisdom which is from God is chaste, in that it seeks not the things that are its own but " the things that are Jesus Christ's," so that, instead of letting us follow each his own will, it makes us consider what is the will of God. And, it is peaceable inasmuch as it does not " abound in its own sense," but rather acquiesces in the judgment and counsel of others.

A third use of water is for irrigation, of which young plants especially have the greatest need. Without it they will either perish entirely or their growth will be greatly retarded for want of moisture. Whoever, therefore, has sown the seeds of good works should seek for the water of devotion, so that, irrigated from the fountain of grace, the garden of his virtuous life may not wither but may flourish in a never-fading bloom. It is for such a soul the Psalmist is praying when he says, " And may thy whole burnt-offering be made fat." Thus also is it written in praise of Aaron that a heavenly fire daily consumed his sacrifice. From this, so it seems, we are to understand that our good works ought to be seasoned with the fervour of

devotion and with the sweetness of spiritual grace. Do you think it possible to find a fourth use of water, or let me say, a fourth fountain, so that we may be able to recover that paradise which was watered and beautified by a four-branched stream? * For if we despair of having the earthly paradise restored to us, how can we hope for the kingdom of heaven? "If I have spoken to you earthly things," said the Saviour, "and you believe not; how will you believe if I shall speak to you heavenly things?" As it is, however, in order that the bestowal of present favours may confirm our hope of the future kingdom, we already actually possess a much better and more delightful Paradise than the one which our first parents lost; and this Paradise of ours is none other than Christ the Lord. In this living Paradise we have now discovered three of the fountains, and the fourth is yet to seek. We have the waters of pardon from the fountain of mercy to wash away our sins; we have the waters of prudence from the fountain of wisdom to slake our thirst; and we have the waters of devotion from the fountain of grace to irrigate the plants of our good works. Let us now seek for the heated waters of ardent zeal with which to cook our food. For these waters serve both to spiritualise and to warm our affections, and they flow from the fountain of charity. Hence the Psalmist says, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out"; and in another place, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." For the sweetness of devotion engenders the love of justice, and the fervour of zeal a hatred of iniquity. And see if the Prophet Isaias is not alluding to these fountains where he says, "You shall draw waters with joy out of the

* Cf. Genesis ii. 10.

Saviour's fountains." But in order to understand that this promise is to be fulfilled, not in the future life, but in the present, consider the words which follow, "And you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord and call upon His name." Now it is only in this life that we are to invoke the name of God, because He has said through the Psalmist, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble."

Furthermore, of these four fountains, the second, third, and fourth appear to belong to the three orders in the Church, one to each. The first is common to all, "for in many things we all offend," and consequently have need of the fountain of mercy to wash away the defilement of our transgressions. "All have sinned," says the Apostle, "and do need the glory, that is, the mercy, of God"; and to whichever order we may belong, whether we are prelates, virgins, or married men, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Therefore, since "no one is free from stain," the fountain of mercy is necessary for all, and all alike, Noe, Daniel, and Job,* ought to run to its waters with the same eagerness. With regard to the other three fountains, let Job seek especially that of wisdom, because he, more than others, walks in the midst of snares, so that it will be a wonderful thing if he avoids all evil. Daniel must have recourse to the fountain of grace, for he has need to irrigate his penitential labours and the austerity of his abstinence with the grace of devotion. It is necessary that we in particular should do everything with cheerfulness, since

* These three holy men are taken as types of the three orders referred to, Noe representing the prelates (Gen. viii. 20), Daniel the virgins, and Job those engaged in the married state.—(Translator.)

" God loveth a cheerful giver." For this earth of ours produces now but very little of the seed of good works, and that little easily perishes unless it be watered with repeated irrigations. Hence in the Lord's Prayer, we daily solicit this grace of devotion when we ask for our daily bread. And not without reason, since otherwise we might fall under that terrible malediction pronounced by the Prophet, " Let them be as grass upon the tops of houses, which withereth before it be plucked up." But to Noe belongs in a special manner the fountain of zeal, because the zeal of charity is looked for particularly in prelates.

Therefore, my brethren, to us who are still living in the flesh, Christ exhibits in Himself four fountains. And He promises after this our exile, to give us a fifth, namely, the fountain of life, for which the Psalmist thirsted when he sang, " My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God." Perhaps it was to designate the first four fountains that Christ was wounded in four places whilst He hung yet living on the cross; and the opening of His Side after He had yielded up His Spirit, may have been intended to signify the fifth. He was still alive when they pierced His Hands and His Feet, so that He might allow four fountains to flow forth from Himself unto us, who are also still living. The fifth wound was inflicted after He had expired, in order that for us, after our death, the fifth fountain might be opened. But behold! Whilst discoursing on the mysteries of the Lord's nativity, I have suddenly digressed to contemplate those of His passion. However, you must not be surprised that I seek in His passion for what He brought us at His birth. For it was in His passion that the coffer was broken and the treasure it contained poured out as the price of our redemption.

SECOND SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

On the Three Principal Works of God, and the Special Virtue conspicuous in each.

"The Lord hath done great things for us."—Ps. cxxv. 3.

"Great are the works of the Lord," cries out the Prophet David. All God's works are great indeed, my brethren, because He is Himself so great. But those which appear to be the greatest amongst them have a special relation to ourselves. Hence it is that the same Prophet declares in one of the psalms, "The Lord hath done great things for us." And there are three of His works particularly which proclaim aloud how magnificently He has dealt with us. These are, the work of our first creation, the work of our present redemption, and the work of our future glorification. But how many great operations, O Lord, does not each of the three comprise! To Thee it belongs to "shew forth to Thy people the power of Thy works," but concerning the works themselves we must not be silent. In each of the three works of creation, redemption, and glorification, we have to consider a special union or blending of opposite elements, truly worthy of the divine power and efficacy. In the first work of our creation, "God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life." Oh, what an Artist, what a Compounder of things diverse, at Whose command the slime of the earth and the spirit of life are thus intimately wedded together! The slime indeed had already received existence, when "in the beginning

God created heaven and earth." But the spirit had a creation proper to itself. It was not produced in common with other things. Neither was it created in the bodily mass, but was infused into it in a singular and excellent manner. Acknowledge, O man, thy dignity. Acknowledge the glory of thy human nature. Thou hast a body like other earthly creatures, since it is only fitting that, as thou art set over all the material world, thou shouldst resemble it at least in part. But thou art also possessed of something more sublime, something which lifts thee entirely above the level of other visible beings. For in thee are united and compacted together spirit and flesh, the former infused, the latter fashioned from the slime.

But for the sake of which element are they thus combined? Which of the two gains by their partnership? According to the wisdom of the children of this world, whenever there is an alliance between high and low, he that is stronger obtains the dominion and uses for his pleasure his weaker associate. The more powerful trample upon the less powerful, the learned laugh at the ignorant, the crafty deceive the simple, the mighty contemn the feeble. But it is not so in Thy works, O Lord; it is not so in this union which Thou hast made. It is not for the sole advantage of the superior partner Thou hast associated the slime of the earth with the spirit of life, the lofty with the lowly, a noble and excellent creature with a mass of vile and worthless clay. For who does not know how much the soul benefits the body? What would the body be without the soul but a lifeless trunk? To the soul it owes its beauty, to the soul it owes its increase and development, to the soul it owes its

clearness of vision and the sound of its voice: in fine, it owes to the soul all its various powers of sensation. This union speaks to me of charity. I thus find the record of charity in the very page which tells me of my own creation. For the Creator has not only announced to me the law of charity at the very commencement of my career, but with His own Hand He has lovingly inscribed it on my being and substance.

Truly great, my dearest brethren, was this alliance of spirit and flesh, if only it had continued firm. As a matter of fact, however, notwithstanding that it had been strengthened with the divine seal (for God made man to His own image and likeness) the seal was broken and the union, alas! destroyed. When as yet that seal was fresh and new, the infernal robber came and broke it. The divine image having been thus lost, miserable man is now "compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them." God made man righteous, and so stamped upon him His own likeness, the likeness of Him of whom the Psalmist sings, "The Lord our God is righteous and there is no iniquity in Him." He also made him truthful and just, as He Himself is Truth and Justice. Nor could the union between flesh and spirit be dissolved whilst this seal of likeness remained unbroken. But there appeared an impostor, who, promising our unsuspecting first parents a better seal, alas! alas! destroyed that which had been impressed by the Hand of God. "You shall be as gods," whispered the serpent, "knowing good and evil." O malevolent one! O most wicked one! What advantage can it be to them to resemble their Creator by such knowledge? Let them by all means be as gods: let them be truthful as God is truthful, to Whom

sin can never approach. For so long as the seal of such likeness endures, the original union of soul and body is safe. But we know now from experience to what we have been persuaded by the deceit of the devil's craft. For when the seal had been violated, there followed bitter dissension between the partners and lamentable divorce. Where now, O impious one, where now is thy promise, "You shall not die the death"? For behold we all die, so that the Psalmist says, "Who is the man that shall live and not see death?"

But what wilt Thou do, O Lord our God? Is this work of Thine never to be repaired? Shall not he who has fallen be assisted to rise? But there is none that can help him except the Lord Who created him. Therefore, "By reason of the misery of the needy and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, saith the Lord"; and "The enemy shall have no advantage over him, nor the son of iniquity have power to hurt him." "I will form another union," He seems to say, "which I will secure with a stronger and deeper Seal, with that, namely, Which is not something made to My Image, but is Itself My Image, the Figure of My Substance and the Splendour of My Glory, a Seal not made but begotten before the day-star." And lest you should have any fears that this new Seal may be broken like the other, listen to the Prophet speaking thereof, "My strength," he says in one of the psalms, "is dried up, viz., hardened, like a potshred." Yes, "like a potshred," but such a potshred as Satan, the mighty hammer of the whole earth, has no power to break. The first union was an alliance of two, the second is a conjunction of three, suggesting to us a

resemblance to the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. The Word Who "was in the beginning with God" and "was God"; the Soul Which had been created out of nothing and before was not; and the Flesh Which divine wisdom separated from the mass of corruption and preserved undefiled: these three elements have coalesced in the unity of a single Person, and are bound together with an indissoluble bond. In this union we find a threefold manifestation of power: that which was not has been created; that which had perished has been restored; that which was over all things has been "made a little less than the angels." These three ingredients, my brethren, are symbolised by the "three measures of meal," which, as the Gospel tells us, were leavened together, and made into the "Bread of angels" whereof man eateth, the Bread Which "strengtheneth man's heart." Happy that woman, and blessed amongst all women, in whose chaste bosom this heavenly Bread was baked, baked over the fire of the Holy Spirit. Blessed, I say, is that woman who hid the leaven of her faith in these three measures. For it was by faith she conceived and by faith she brought forth. To this St. Elizabeth bears witness when she says, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." And be not surprised to hear that it was by means of Mary's faith that the Word was united to flesh, because it was from Mary's flesh Christ's Flesh was taken. Nor is it any objection to this interpretation that, according to the Gospel, "the kingdom of heaven is like to leaven." For, as it seems to me, the faith of Mary may also be likened to the kingdom of heaven,

since it was by her faith the kingdom of heaven has been restored.

Therefore no creature has power to break the bond of this second union, since even "the prince of this world hath not anything" he can claim in Christ, and the Baptist is not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe. What then? It is plainly needful that it be dissolved to some extent. Otherwise the first union, which has been destroyed, can never be restored. Bread that is unbroken, a treasure that is concealed, wisdom that is not manifest—what is the use of such things? With good reason did St. John weep, as he tells us in the Apocalypse, "because no man was found worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof." For whilst it remained closed none of us could gain access to the divine wisdom it contained. Open Thou the book, O Lamb of God, O Thou Who art meekness itself. Present Thy Hands and Thy Feet to the Jew, to be pierced with nails, so that the treasure of salvation, the "plentiful redemption" concealed within, may at last pour itself out. "Break Thy bread to the hungry," because Thou alone canst break it Who alone art able to stand in order to repair Thy broken creatures. For in the general breaking * Thou alone dost possess the power to lay down Thy life and to take it up again when Thou pleasest. Therefore, in Thy compassion for our need, let this Temple be dissolved in part, but not utterly destroyed. Let the Soul be separated from the Body, but let the Divinity guard the incorruption of the Flesh, and confer upon the Spirit full liberty, so that It alone may be "free among the dead" to lead forth from

* Allusion to Psalm cv. 23.

their prison-house them that are shut up and sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let Thy holy Soul lay aside Its immaculate Flesh, but only to take It up again on the third day, so that by dying Thou mayest destroy death, and by rising from the dead mayest restore life to man. So it has been, dearest brethren, and it is a cause of joy to us that it has so been. Death has been slain by His death, and we have been "regenerated unto the hope of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

But as for the third union, who shall describe it? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." That will be the consummation, when Christ shall "deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father," and they, viz., Christ and His Bride, the Church, shall be two, not now in one flesh, but in one spirit. For if the Word by cleaving to the flesh was made flesh, much more shall she that cleaves to God become one spirit with Him. In the second union of the Word with flesh, humility is manifested, a humility exceedingly great. But in that for which we look, for which we sigh, there is laid up for us—if indeed for us—the perfection of heavenly glory. If you recall now what I said about the first of these unions, in which man is compacted of spirit and flesh, namely, that therein charity is commended to us, you will see with what reason humility is so conspicuous in the second, because it is only the virtue of humility that can repair the injury done to charity. The union of such a noble creature as the rational soul with a body fashioned from the slime of the earth, must not be ascribed to humility. For it is not by its own deliberate

choice that the spirit is mixed with matter, since it is infused by the very act which creates it and created by the very act which infuses it.* But the same is not true of the Sovereign and Divine Spirit, Who being infinitely good, has united Himself by His own free will and pleasure to a Body pure and undefiled. Then the union of glory follows upon that of charity and humility; because without charity nothing is of any avail, and, according to the words of Christ, no one shall be exalted but he that humbleth himself.

* "Creando immittur, immitendo creatur." By these few words the Saint excludes all the various false theories touching the origin of the human soul: the traducianism of Tertullian, according to which the infant's soul is derived by material generation from the bodies of the parents; the more spiritual but equally unintelligible traducianism to which St. Augustine inclined, and which Frohshammer and Klee resuscitated in Germany at the beginning of the last century, viz., that the soul of the offspring proceeds somehow from the souls of the parents; the theory of Origen who, influenced by Plato's philosophy, and misinterpreting Ps. xxxii. 15, taught that all souls were created together at the beginning of time; and finally the strange doctrine of Rosmini, that the sentient soul, produced by generation, is in man transformed into a rational, spiritual soul "by the manifestation to it of the idea of being." The teaching of St. Bernard is the teaching of the Catholic Church: that the human soul does not exist before its union with the body, and that it is produced by creation out of nothing. Cf. Maher, *Psychology*, 572-4; Hickey, *Summula*, vol. ii. 456-9; also Bellarmin, *Comment. in Ps.* xxxii. 15.—(Translator.)

THIRD SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

On the Place, Time, and other circumstances of the Nativity.

"*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*"—John i. 14.

In the nativity of Christ, my brethren, we have to consider two orders of things, two orders which are not only distinct from each other, but very much unlike. To the first belong the birth of a Child Who is very God; the preservation of His Mother's virginity; and the painlessness of her bringing forth. To the same: the new light from heaven shining amid the darkness; the Angel's announcement of tidings of great joy; the multitude of the heavenly host singing praises to their King; glory given to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will; the shepherds hastening to Bethlehem, and finding there the Word announced to them, and telling the news to others; the awe and admiration of everyone that hears. These and all such-like happenings, my dearest brethren, are the work of divine power, not of human weakness. They are, as it were, plates and vessels of silver and gold, from which even the poor are allowed to eat and drink to-day at the table of the Lord, on account of the greatness of the solemnity. But we have no permission to take them away: it is not the golden dish and goblet that are given us, but the food and drink they contain. "When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince," says the Wise Man, "consider diligently what is set before thy face." But—to come to the things of

the second order—I recognise as truly my own the time and place of this nativity, the tenderness of the Infant's Body, the cries and tears of the Little One; also the poverty and the night-watches of the shepherds to whom the Saviour's birth is first announced. These things, I say, are mine; they serve my interests; they are the food set before me; they are given me for my instruction and consolation. Christ was born in winter, and He was born at night. Are we to suppose, my brethren, that it was by mere chance and without any special design, that He to Whom belong day and night, summer and winter, came into this world in the most inclement of seasons and in the time of darkness? Other infants do not choose the time of their birth, because, hardly yet beginning to live, they have not the use of reason or the faculty of free choice, or the power of deliberation. But Christ, although He was not man before His incarnation, nevertheless "was in the beginning with God" and "was God," possessing the same wisdom and power as now, as being always the Wisdom and the Power of God. Consequently, when the Son of God was about to be born into this world, it was His privilege to choose whatever season He pleased. And the choice He made was of the most disagreeable, especially for a little Child, the Son of a poor Mother, who had scarcely the swaddling clothes in which to wrap Him, and no cradle wherein to lay Him but the manger. Nowhere can I find any mention of furs for His use, although the necessity was undoubtedly great. The first Adam covered himself with garments of skins; the second Adam is wrapped in poor swaddling clothes. Such things, my brethren, are not in accordance with he wisdom of the world. Therefore either Jesus Christ

is deceived or the world is in error. But it is impossible that He Who is the Wisdom of God should be liable to deception. Justly then is the prudence of the flesh—which is death—called "an enemy to God," and the wisdom of the world "foolishness." For consider. Christ, Whose judgment is infallible, has chosen for Himself what is most disagreeable to nature. This must, consequently, be better, more expedient, more desirable than what pleases the flesh. And should any one teach or recommend to you a different doctrine, avoid him as a seducer.

The Saviour also selected the night as the time of His birth. Where now are those who so shamelessly desire to make a parade of themselves? Christ chooses what He judges to be most salutary: you select what He repudiates. Is your wisdom superior to his? Is your judgment more true than His? Is your decision safer than His? Christ holds His peace, He does not extol Himself. He does not magnify or preach Himself; and behold an angel announces Him, whilst a multitude of the heavenly host celebrates His advent. Do thou, therefore, my brother, if thou wouldst follow Christ, conceal the treasure which thou hast found. Love to be unknown.* Let another's mouth praise thee, but thine own never. Furthermore, Christ was born in a stable and laid in a manger. But is it not He Who says, "Mine is the earth and the fulness thereof"? Wherefore, then, does He choose a stable? Evidently in order to condemn the glory of this world, to reprobate the vanity of men. As yet His tongue is silent, but all else that belongs to Him cries aloud, preaches, evangelises. Even

* "If thou wouldst know and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown" (*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. I. ch. ii.).

the limbs of His infant Body have the power of utterance. In everything does He censure, oppose, and refute the judgment of the world. For who amongst men, if given the choice, would not rather select a strong body and fully developed faculties than the tenderness and helplessness of childhood? O Wisdom, "drawn out of secret places," as holy Job says! O Wisdom of God truly incarnated and veiled under the flesh! For in truth, my brethren, this Child is the Little One promised of old through Isaias, Who should "know to refuse the evil and to choose the good." Bodily comfort must therefore be evil, and affliction of the flesh must be good, since this wise Little One, this infant Word chooses the latter and rejects the former. For "the Word was made flesh," weak flesh, infant flesh, tender flesh, feeble flesh, flesh incapable of any work, of any labour.

And truly, my brethren, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt (in the flesh) among us." Whilst He "was in the beginning with God" He dwelt in "light inaccessible," and there was none able to endure His brightness, "for who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" "The sensual man perceived not these things that are of the Spirit of God." But now even "the sensual man" may perceive, because the Word is made flesh. If he can comprehend nothing but what concerns the flesh, behold the Word is now flesh: let him hear that Word even in the flesh. O man, the Wisdom of God is presented to thee in the flesh. That Wisdom which was formerly concealed, behold It is now "drawn out of (Its) secret places," and manifests Itself even to thy bodily senses. It calls out to thee, as I may say, in a manner intelligible even to the carnal-minded, "Shun

pleasure, because death sits close to the entrance of delight. Do penance, because by penance the kingdom of heaven is brought near." This, my brethren, this is what the stable preaches to us, this is what the manger clearly expresses, what those infantine members unmistakably announce, what those tears and cries proclaim aloud. Christ weeps, but not as other children are wont to weep, I mean not for the same reason. For it is sensible suffering that causes the tears in others, whereas the tears of Christ flow from an affection of compassion. Other infants weep because of their own misery, Christ weeps over ours. They lament the heavy burden which weighs upon all the children of Adam, He bewails the sins which defile the children of Adam. And for those for whom He now pours out His tears, He will hereafter shed His Blood. Oh, the flinty hardness of this heart of mine! Would to God that it also, like the Word, was made flesh! Thou, O Lord, hast even promised this by Thy Prophet Ezechiel, saying, "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh."

Brethren, the tears of Christ overwhelm me with shame and fear and sorrow. I was playing out of doors in the street, whilst sentence of death was being passed upon me in the privacy of the royal council-chamber. But the King's only-begotten Son heard of it. And what did He do? He went forth from the palace, put off His diadem, covered Himself with sackcloth, strewed ashes on His head, bared His feet, and wept and lamented because His poor slave was condemned to death. I meet Him unexpectedly in this sad condition. I am astonished at the woeful change in Him and inquire the cause. He tells me the whole story. What am I to do

now? Shall I continue to play and make a mockery of His tears? Surely I have neither sense nor reason if I do not rather follow Him and unite my tears with His. This is the cause of my shame. Shall I tell you also the source of my sorrow and my fear? It is the fact that I estimate the magnitude of my danger from a consideration of the remedy. I had no idea how desperate was my condition. I believed myself to be in good health. And behold, the Son of the Virgin, the Son of the Most High, is sent for, and ordered to be slain, so that my wounds may be healed by the balsam of His most precious Blood! Acknowledge, O man, how serious were thy wounds, since to heal them it was necessary that Christ should be wounded. Had thy wounds not been unto death, yea, unto everlasting death, the Son of God would never have died for their remedy. It were shame for us, then, dearest brethren, to neglect or dissemble those wounds of ours for which we behold so august a Majesty manifesting so much compassion. The Son of God compassionates our misery and weeps over us, and shall we who suffer the misery, only laugh at it? Thus the consideration of the preciousness of the remedy fills my soul with fear and sorrow.

Nevertheless, this very fact of the remedy being so precious shall also become to me a source of consolation, if I am faithful in carrying out the Doctor's prescriptions. For if, on the one hand, the use of such costly medicine makes known to me the seriousness of my malady, on the other hand, it gives me grounds for thinking that I am not incurable. Surely so wise a Physician, nay, a Physician Who is Wisdom Itself, would not apply in vain, would not waste a remedy of

infinite worth. But it is manifest that it would be wasted not only if a cure could be easily obtained without it, but also, and much more, if even with its use a cure were impossible. Therefore, the hope I have conceived animates me to the practice of penance and powerfully inflames my desire to be cured. And I derive an increase of comfort from the angelic visitation and allocution vouchsafed to the watching shepherds. "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation" from the things of earth, and are therefore unworthy of the consolations of heaven! How many noble, according to the flesh, how many mighty, how many of the wise of this world were resting on their soft beds at that hour, and not one of them was deemed worthy to witness the new light, or to hear the glad tidings of great joy, or to listen to the angels as they sang in the air, "Glory to God in the highest." From this we should learn that they who "are not in the labour of men," as the Psalmist says, do not deserve to be visited by angels. We should learn also how pleasing to the inhabitants of heaven is the labour of him whose intention is pure and spiritual, since they honour with their speech, and with speech so delightful, even such as toil for the support of their bodies, and under the compulsion of corporal necessity. For in this way they show their respect for that law imposed on the human race by God, when He said to Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

I entreat you, dearest brethren, to consider more attentively how much God has done for your instruction and salvation. Otherwise His words may be found unfruitful in you, His words so "living and

efficacious," so "faithful and worthy of all acceptation," and expressed more by the labour of action than by the breath of the mouth. Do you suppose, my brethren, that it would be only a small disappointment to me did I know that these words which I am now addressing to you were destined to die in your hearts without producing any fruit? And who am I or what are my words? If, then, a man of such little consequence, yea, of no consequence at all, grieves to behold the "labour of his lips," insignificant though it be, expended to no purpose, with how much greater reason shall the anger of the Lord of Majesty be enkindled against us, if by our negligence or hardness of heart, we bring to naught the mighty works He has accomplished for our salvation? May He Who, in order to save us, consented to assume the servile form, may He deign to guard His poor servants from so dreadful a misfortune, for He is the Only-Begotten of the Father and is over all things God blessed for ever. Amen.

FOURTH SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

On the Virtues commended to us by the Nativity.

"And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."—Luke ii. 12.

How great is the solemnity of Christmas you may recognise, my dearest brethren, from the fact that the day is too short for its celebration, and the wide-extended earth too narrow. It must spread itself out in space and in time. It invades the realms of night and occupies both heaven and earth. For the "night was illuminated as the day" when in the midst of its course that new light from above shone round about the shepherds. And in order that we might know where this joyous festivity began to be celebrated, there suddenly appeared "a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God," and the shepherds were told that the "great joy" already experienced by the angels, "shall be (communicated) to all the people." This is the reason why the present feast is regarded as more solemn than any other, and is more joyously kept "in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles"; and in the offices of to-day especially, we may believe, without the slightest hesitation, that the celestial "princes go before joined with singers, in the midst of young damsels playing on timbrels."

How many altars are glittering to-day with gems and gold! How many churches are decorated with

costly hangings! But do you suppose that the angels of God will be attracted by this earthly splendour, and will turn away in disgust from the rags of the poor? If such be the case, how is it that they showed themselves of old, not to the kings of the earth, or to the priests of the temple, but rather to the "shepherds keeping the night-watches over their flock"? How is it that the Saviour Himself, to whom belong all the earth's treasures of silver and gold, has consecrated and sanctified poverty in His own Person? How is it, also, that the angel makes such deliberate reference to the poverty of the new-born Child? For not without a certain purpose and mysterious significance was the Saviour wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger, since this was expressly offered as a sign to the shepherds: "This shall be a sign unto unto you," said the Angel, "you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." Thus, O Lord Jesus, even Thy poor swaddling clothes have been "set for a sign," and "for a sign which (is) contradicted" by many to this day. "For many are called, but few are chosen," and few, consequently, signed.* Brethren, I recognise now, I recognise "Jesus the (great) High-Priest" Who was "clothed with filthy garments" whilst He disputed with the devil—I am speaking to persons who know the Scriptures and are familiar with the symbolic vision vouchsafed the

* "And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying: hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were signed: an hundred and forty-four thousand were signed of every tribe of the children of Israel" (Apocalypse vii. 2-4).

Prophet Zachary.* But when our Divine Head had triumphed over the enemies of our salvation, He at once "clothed Himself with a change of garments," He "put on beauty," and appeared covered "with light as with a garment," giving us an example, that as He has done so we should do also. For although an iron breast-plate is not so light and graceful as a linen robe, it is more serviceable in time of war. But the day will come when the members shall follow their Head, and then the whole body shall sing with one voice and one spirit, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into joy: Thou hast cut my sackcloth, and hast compassed me with gladness."

"You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." Thus spoke the Angel. And a little further on we read of the shepherds how "they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." Now, what is the meaning of this? The Angel appears to have mentioned only the humble Infant, and yet the shepherds find not the Infant alone, but Mary and Joseph also. Perhaps the celestial herald had a particular desire to commend to us the virtue of humility, embodied in the new-born Babe, because he had himself stood firm in humility when his brother-angels fell

* "And the Lord shewed me Jesus the high-priest standing before the angel of the Lord: and Satan stood on his right hand to be his adversary. And the Lord said to Satan: The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan: and the Lord that chose Jerusalem rebuke thee: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? And Jesus was clothed with filthy garments: and he stood before the face of the angel. Who answered and said to them that stood before him: Take away the filthy garments from him. And he said to him: Behold I have taken away thy iniquity, and have clothed thee with change of garments" (Zachary iii. 1-5).

through pride. Or perhaps the reason why he made special mention of what belongs to humility is this: in order to teach us that it is by humility more than by any other virtue we are to honour the Majesty of God. But humility is never found alone, since God always "giveth grace to the humble." Therefore the shepherds found "Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." For as the infancy of the Saviour manifestly designates the virtue of humility, in the same way is continence represented by the Virgin, and justice by Joseph, whom the Evangelist calls "a just man," and "whose praise is in the Gospel." Who does not know that purity is a perfection which belongs to one's own flesh? Justice, on the contrary, has regard to one's neighbour, being the virtue which inclines us to give every man his due. And humility has relation to God, because it reconciles us to Him, makes us subject to His law, and renders us pleasing in His sight. Hence the holy Virgin said, "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." Consequently he who violates continence, sins against his own body; he who violates justice, sins against his neighbour; and he who by pride and self-exaltation violates humility, sins against God. The first degrades himself, the second oppresses his neighbour; the third dishonours God, so far as it depends on him. The Lord says, "I will not give My glory to another." But the proud man replies, "Although Thou refusest to give me Thy glory, I will nevertheless take it." For pride is not pleased with the division made by the angels, when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." The proud man, therefore, does not worship God, but is rather lifted up against Him

with manifest impiety and infidelity. What indeed is piety but the worship of God? And how can anyone really worship God unless he voluntarily subjects himself to Him, so as to be able to say with the Psalmist, "As the eyes of the handmaiden are on the hands of her mistress, so are the eyes of my heart on the Lord, our God"?

Therefore, my brethren, let us "live soberly, and justly, and godlily in this world," if we desire to find always in ourselves "Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." For it was unto this that "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared, instructing us"; and if we are faithful in the practice of these virtues, the glory of God also shall be revealed to us. We have the testimony of St. Paul for this. "The grace of God our Saviour," he says, "hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, justly, and godlily in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Grace hath appeared in the Little One, but this Little One "shall be great," as the Angel Gabriel predicted of Him. And those whom the Little One shall have instructed unto humility and meekness of heart, shall hereafter be made great and glorious at the coming of the great and glorious God, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things and blessed for evermore. Amen.

FIFTH SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

On Man's twofold Misery and the twofold Mercy of God, and on the Consolation which the poor find in the Nativity.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation."—1 Cor. i. 3-4.

Blessed be the Father "for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us," and sent us His own Beloved Son, in Whom He is well-pleased, to reconcile us by His death that we might "have peace with God," and to become Himself not only the Mediator but also the Pledge of our reconciliation. With so loving a Mediator, my brethren, we have no need to be disquieted; and with so faithful a Pledge, there is no cause for diffidence. But you will say, "What manner of Mediator is He Who is born in a stable, is laid in a manger, is wrapped in swaddling clothes like other infants, weeps like other infants, and lies weak and helpless like other infants?" Nevertheless, He is in truth a most powerful Mediator, and is seeking the things that are to our peace, not negligently (as we do ourselves), but zealously and efficaciously, even in this state of seeming impotence. He is indeed an Infant, but the infant Word of God, Whose very infancy is divinely eloquent. "Be comforted, be comforted, My people, saith your God." This is what Emmanuel, God with us, is saying to us now. This is what the stable is crying out to us, and the manger, and the Infant's tears, and

the clothes that cover Him. The stable announces that a shelter is provided for the poor man who fell among robbers. The manger reminds us that food is being ministered to the same man who " is compared to senseless beasts and is become like them." The tears and swaddling clothes proclaim that his raw wounds are being washed and bound up. For Christ has no need of such things. He wants none of these for Himself, but all are for His chosen. " They will reverence My Son," said the Father of mercies. They will, indeed, O Lord, and they do reverence Him. But who? Not the Jews to whom He was sent, but the elect for whose sake He was sent.

For we reverence Him in the manger, we reverence Him on the cross, we reverence Him in the sepulchre. Lovingly do we embrace our God, become a tender Child for us; lovingly do we honour Him, all covered with blood for our sakes, pale with the pallor of death for our sakes, laid in the tomb for our sakes. Most devoutly do we adore our Infant Saviour with the Magi; most affectionately do we clasp Him to our breast, with holy Simeon, " receiving Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy Temple." For He is the Same of Whom we read, " The Mercy of God is from eternity." Surely there can be nothing co-eternal with the Father save the Son and the Holy Ghost. And Each of these Two is not so much merciful, as Mercy Itself. But the Father Himself is also Mercy. And these Three are not three mercies, but one Mercy, just as They are one Essence, one Wisdom, one Divinity, one Majesty. Nevertheless, since God is called the " Father of mercies," who does not see that the name of Mercy specially and by appropriation designates the Son?

And justly is He called the "Father of mercies," "to Whom it is natural to show mercy always and to spare."

But some one may object to this, and say, "How is it natural to Him 'to show mercy always,' since His 'judgments are a great deep,' according to the Psalmist? Neither is it said that 'all His ways are mercy,' but that 'all His ways are mercy and truth,' that is, mercy and justice. And the same Prophet implies that He is not less just than merciful, in the words, 'Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord.'" I grant all this, my brethren. "He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth." Still I say it is natural for Him to show mercy, for He finds in His own Divine Nature the motive and impulse to this. But if He also judges and condemns, that is because we compel Him, as it were, to do so. And thus it is clear that mercy proceeds from His Heart in a manner very different from punishment. But listen to what He says Himself by the Prophet Ezechiel, "Is it My will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that He should be converted from his ways and live?" Rightly, therefore, is He called, not the Father of judgments, or of vengeance, but the "Father of mercies"; not only because mercy appears to belong more to a father than indignation, and because "as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him"; but also and especially because (as I have said) He discovers in Himself alone the motive and impulse to show mercy, whereas when He exercises judgment or vengeance the cause is in us.

But it may be further asked, wherefore then is He

called the "Father of *mercies*," rather than the Father of *mercy*? "God hath spoken once," says the Psalmist, "these two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to Thee, O Lord." But the Apostle represents to us this same mercy as manifold in the one Word, in the one Son, when he calls God "the Father," not of one mercy, but "of mercies," and "the God" not of some, but "of *all* comfort, Who comforteth us in *all* our tribulation." "The mercies of the Lord are many," as the Prophet Jeremias in his turn bears witness; and they need to be many, since "many (also) are the afflictions of the just, and out of them all will the Lord deliver them." One is the Son of God, and the Word is but one; whilst our manifold misery demands not only great mercy, but even "a multitude of tender mercies." Yet perhaps on account of the two substances which are united in man, namely, the flesh and the spirit, and in each of which he is miserable, we may speak not improperly of human misery as twofold; although in reality man is subject to a multitude of miseries, both in body and in soul. Many in truth are the tribulations we suffer in our material and in our spiritual part, but He Who "made the whole man sound on the Sabbath day," delivers us from all our necessities. Since, therefore, the one and Only-Begotten Son of the Father has already come for the sake of our souls, viz., to "take away the sins of the world," and is to come again for the sake of our bodies, to raise them up and to make them "like to the Body of His glory," it ought not to seem unreasonable if I say that this twofold mercy is acknowledged when God is called the "Father of mercies." For by taking to Himself the two elements of our human

nature, the soul, namely, and the body, He, the Lord our God, seems to say to us, "Be comforted, My people," not once only, but with reiteration, as before through His Prophet, "Be comforted, be comforted, My people." Thus are we given assurance that He, Who did not disdain to assume both our flesh and our spirit, has also the will to save both.

But whom do you think He will thus save? His own people, doubtless. For even now, at His first coming, "He will save—not everyone, but—His people from their sins." And, in like manner, it is not every body, but only the "body of our lowness" that shall hereafter be "made like to the Body of His glory." It is therefore His own people He comforts, that is, "the humble people" whom He will save, as the Psalmist testifies, when He will "bring down the eyes of the proud." Shall I tell you more clearly who are His people? "To Thee is the poor man left," says the man according to God's own heart. And Christ Himself says in the Gospel, "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation." Would that we, my dearest brethren, were always desirous to be found amongst that happy people, who, so far from being threatened with woes, are rather comforted by the Lord their God! Why, indeed, should He comfort those who have their own consolation? No, the speechless Babe in the manger offers no consolation to the garruolus; the tears of the Infant Christ do not comfort the lovers of mirth; His poor swaddling clothes suggest nothing consoling to them that "wish to walk in long robes"; the crib and the stable have no comforting lesson for such as "love the first seats in the synagogues." But perhaps they will declare themselves

satisfied to let all this consolation go to those who "wait with silence for the salvation of God," to those who mourn, and to those who are clad in the livery of the poor. Let them know, therefore, that the angels also will comfort none others. For it is to the "shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock" that the joy of the new light is announced, and for them the Saviour is said to be born. Upon the poor and the toiling—not upon you that are rich and "have your consolation," and with it the divinely-denounced woe—the "day of sanctification has dawned" amid the watches of the night, so that the "night (is) illuminated as the day," or is rather changed into day, since the Angel says, not "this night," but "this day is born to you a Saviour." For "the night is passed and the Day is at hand," the true Day of true Day, the Salvation of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things and is Himself true God, blessed for evermore. Amen.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

On the Three Kinds of Sanctity or Martyrdom, represented by St. Stephen, St. John Evangelist, and the Holy Innocents.

"Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."—Ps. viii. 3.

"Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord. The Lord is God, and hath shined upon us." So speaks the Psalmist. And the Prophet Daniel says, "Blessed is the name of His glory, which is holy." It was not in vain, my brethren, that the Holy One was born of Mary, seeing that thereby both the name and the grace of His sanctity have been so widely diffused. For it is by participation in His holiness that Stephen and John and the Innocents are holy. Therefore it has been wisely ordained that the solemnities in honour of these saints should immediately follow that of the Lord's nativity; because not only does such a succession of feasts keep alive our devotion, but it also makes more clearly manifest to us the fruit of Christ's coming, by representing these three festivals as a continuation, so to speak, of Christmas. You may have noticed that in the same three solemnities we celebrate three distinct kinds of sanctity. Nor will it be easy to discover any human sanctity which does not belong to one of the three. For in St. Stephen we have

both the will and the act of martyrdom ; in St. John Evangelist we have the will without the act ; whilst in the Holy Innocents we have the act without the will. All of them drank the chalice of salvation, either in act and will together, or in will alone, or in act alone. " My chalice indeed you shall drink," said the Lord to James and John, speaking no doubt of the chalice of His passion. And when He said to Peter, " Follow Me," inviting him, as is evident, to imitate Himself by martyrdom, " Peter, turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following," not so much with his bodily feet as with the feet of his fervent devotion. Therefore John also drank the chalice of suffering, and followed his Lord, like Peter, although not like Peter in every way. For that he so remained as not to follow his Master even by a visible martyrdom was due to the divine will, " So will I have him to remain," answered Jesus to Peter, " till I come. What is it to thee ? " As if He should say, " He indeed desires to follow Me, but it is My will that he shall remain."

Who has any doubt that the Holy Innocents have received the martyr's crown ? He who does not admit this, who does not admit that the crown of martyrdom has been the reward of the infants slain for Christ, ought also to disbelieve that infants regenerated in Christ are numbered amongst the children of adoption. For how could that Little One Who was born not against us but for us, have suffered so many other little ones of His own time to be slaughtered on His account, when with the will He might have prevented it, unless He had prepared for them something more precious than the life they were robbed of ? We may then suppose that the martyrdom they endured for Christ's sake was

sufficient to sanctify them, just as circumcision sufficed for the salvation of other infants at that time,* and as baptism suffices now, without any voluntary co-operation. And if you ask what was their merit before God that they should be crowned, inquire also what was their crime against Herod that they should be slain. Shall the mercy and love of Christ, think you, be outdone by Herod's wickedness, so that He shall not have power to crown the infants done to death for His sake, whilst the tyrant is permitted to massacre the innocent? Let us say, therefore, that Stephen is a martyr to the eyes of men, the voluntariness of whose suffering was shown by this especially, that at the very moment of death he manifested more solicitude for his persecutors than for himself, as if the interior affection of compassion overcame in him the sense of bodily pain; for he grieved more for their crimes than for his

* Regarding the efficacy of circumcision there are three opinions. Some theologians, including St. Augustine, St. Bernard (*De Baptismo*, i.), St. Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, and Suarez, hold that it conferred grace, like the Christian sacraments, that is, "ex opere operato" or by an infallible decree of God. In support of this view may be cited the words of Pope Innocent III, who says that baptism *has succeeded* circumcision. Others, after St. Thomas, such as Bellarmin, and Vasquez, deny any such infallible efficacy to circumcision, and appeal to the authority of St. Paul and of the Councils of Florence and Trent. According to these circumcision was a purely external rite, instituted not to confer grace, but to distinguish the Jew from the Gentile. The third opinion is that of Cardinal de Lugo. This author distinguishes two aspects in circumcision. So far as it was a rite of the Mosaic law it did not communicate grace; but it did confer grace in so far as it contained and applied the "remedy of nature," and was an external profession of faith in the Redeemer to come; just as the blood of the Paschal lamb saved the Jews from the destroying angel, not because it was the blood of a lamb but because it typified the Blood of Christ. Cf. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. lxii. a. 6, also lect. ii. in Ep. ad Rom. c. 4; and de Lugo, Disp. 5, s. 3, n. 40.—(Translator.)

own wounds. Let us say that John was a martyr to the eyes of the angels, who, as being spiritual creatures, could discern more surely the interior evidences of his ardent desire. But the Innocents were truly and in a special sense Thy martyrs, O Lord, because the power and excellence of Thy grace Thou hast clearly manifested in them, in whom neither men nor angels could discover any merit. Thus, as the Psalmist predicted, "out of the mouth of infants and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." "Glory to God in the highest," sang the angels, "and on earth peace to men of good will." That, my brethren, was great praise, indeed: but I make bold to affirm, it was as yet imperfect, until the coming of Him Who should say, "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come to Me, for the kingdom of heaven is for such," and until there should be peace for men in the sacrament of mercy even without the co-operation of their own will. Let those who are fond of disputing so contentiously about the intention and the act weigh these things well. Let them observe and consider that neither must be neglected even when both are not in our power; especially because, where we cannot have the two, either without the other may suffice, not only for salvation, but even for sanctification. But let them be firmly persuaded of this also, that although the act *without* the intention may be enough for salvation, the act *against* the intention profiteth nothing; so that the very same thing—the mere external act—which for the infant merits a crown, becomes for the hypocrite a cause of damnation. Furthermore, the intention is sometimes sufficient without the act, yet not against the act. To give you an example. A person dies with a will that is

good indeed, but not perfect, not adequate to the enduring of martyrdom. Will anyone dare to deny him salvation because of this imperfection? Perhaps the very reason why God did not allow him to sustain so grievous a trial was lest he should sink under it, and so be lost. For were he subjected to an ordeal too trying for his imperfect will, and received at the same time no special succour of grace, can there be any doubt that he would yield, that he would deny the faith and, dying in his apostasy, would perish for ever? "He that shall deny Me before men," says the Lord, "I will also deny Him before my Father Who is in heaven." Therefore, that imperfect will, which now is sufficient to save him whilst there is no opportunity for the act, would then be of no avail, because of the defect of the act when the occasion has been provided, or rather I should say, because of the act of defection. The same thing might happen through ignorance.* Let us, therefore, my brethren, have zeal for charity, and apply ourselves diligently to the practice of good works, never making light of any sins, even sins of ignorance and frailty. Let us rather, with all fear and solicitude, return thanks to our most kind and generous Redeemer, Who seeks out occasions for saving human souls with such abounding love that He is delighted

* That is to say, when one is invincibly ignorant of what God requires, the good will to obey Him is taken for the deed. Thus an honest heretic does not sin by remaining outside the true Church; he may even merit by doing so, or sin by acting otherwise, because there is an obligation to follow the conscience, even should it be invincibly erroneous. Nevertheless when it is a question of sacramental rites and their "ex opere operato" effects, the intention avails nothing without the external action. A sacrament invalid by reason of some defect in matter or form can never be validated by the recipient's good will.—(Translator.)

not only when in some He discovers both the will and the act, but also when He finds in others either the will without the act or the act without the will. For He " will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And " this is eternal life that (we) may know Thee, (O Father) the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent," and Who is also with Thee the one true God, over all things, and blessed for evermore Amen.

SERMONS FOR THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION.

On the different Kinds of Circumcision; on the Name of Salvation and the Three Witnesses.

"*And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus.*"—Luke ii. 22.

You have heard, my brethren, a "great mystery of godliness" announced in a few words. You have heard a passage of Scripture corresponding in its brevity to the "abridgment" which, according to Isaias, the Lord hath made of His own Word on the earth. For the Word of God, already "abridged" by the incarnation, is still more "abridged" to-day by the rite of circumcision. The Only-Begotten of the Father was "made a little less than the angels" when He assumed our humanity, but now surely He has become, not a little, but a great deal less than the angels, by submitting to the remedy of our human corruption. We have here, consequently, a powerful support for our faith, and at the same time an illustrious example of humility. What need hast Thou to be circumcised, O Lord, Who art free from all defilement of sin, both personal and inherited? That Thou hast committed no sin Thyself is evident from Thy infancy; that Thou hast not contracted the stain of original sin is more evident still from the Divinity of Thy Father and from the integrity

of Thy Mother. Thou art that High-Priest of Whom it is predicted in the Law *—for it is a prophecy rather than a command—that He should contract defilement neither from Father nor Mother. For Thou hast a Father from all eternity, but a Father Who is God and consequently immune from sin; and Thou hast been born in time of a Mother, but of a Mother who preserved her virginity, and being thus incorrupt herself, could transmit no corruption to her Offspring. Yet, notwithstanding His sinlessness, the Virgin's Child—the Lamb without spot—is circumcised as other infants. He needed it not, yet willed to endure it. Although not having so much as the trace of a wound, He does not decline the remedy. "Not so the wicked, not so." It is not in this way the perversity of human pride acts. *We* are ashamed to have our wounds bound up, yea, and sometimes even glory in our wounds. We are ashamed to do penance, yet have no shame of doing deeds of shame. Can any madness be greater than this? The Saviour Himself, Whom no man could "convince of sin," submits without necessity to a remedy for sin as painful as it is ignominious; He refuses not the "knife of stone" wherewith alone the original corruption could be scraped away; He "Who did no sin" does not disdain to be reputed a sinner. And we, although willing enough to be sinners in fact, cannot bear to be so esteemed! Is it then the healthy that are in need of medicine, and not they that are ill? I should rather have said, is it for the physician a remedy is sought and not for his patient? Who amongst men would willingly submit to be circumcised, if conscious —I will not say of such glory, but—of such innocence

* Leviticus xxi. 11.

as belonged to Christ ? But He contentedly " paid what He took not away," as the Psalmist sings, though He came, not to endure the purgation but, as the Apostle says, to " make a purgation of sins." However, it may be asked, why should not He Who is only a Little One endure this purgation just as other little ones ? But it were more pertinent to ask why should not He endure it Who is so " meek and humble of heart " ? * Or why should not He Who was " dumb as a lamb before His shearers," Who was silent before His executioners, submit with patience to His circumciser ? For to preserve His own Flesh from the knife of circumcision could not have been hard to Him Who was able to issue forth from His Mother's womb without injury to her integrity. This Little One Who with all ease guarded His Body after death from corruption, could not have found it difficult to protect It living from the wound of circumcision.

" After eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus." How great and marvellous a mystery ! The Child is circumcised and His name is called Jesus. Wherefore are these two things united ? For circumcision appears to belong rather to those who need salvation than to Jesus, that is, to the Saviour ; and it seems more proper for the Saviour to circumcise others than to be circumcised Himself. But, my brethren, recognise in this Infant the " Mediator of God and men," Who from the very beginning of His created existence associates things divine with things human, the lowest with the highest.

* The Saint means that Christ submitted to the painful rite of circumcision, not because He was powerless to resist—for though a Little One, He still was God—but because He was " meek and humble of heart."—(Translator.)

He is born of a woman; but of a woman who is privileged to bear the fruit of motherhood without losing the flower of virginity. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes; but these swaddling clothes are celebrated with angelic songs. He is concealed in a manger; but heaven sends down a star to manifest His presence. Thus also His circumcision proves the reality of His Human Nature, whilst the name "which is above all names" reveals the glory of His Majesty. He is circumcised as being a true son of Abraham; He is called Jesus as being the true Son of God. For in this Jesus of ours the name is not an empty title, as it was in His forbears. He has not the shadow but the truth of a great name. The Evangelist distinctly tells us that He received this name from heaven, for he says that it "was called by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb." Mark what a depth of meaning there is here. After the birth of Jesus He was called Jesus by men, by which name He had already been called by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb. However, we ought not to be surprised at this, because Jesus is the Saviour of both angels and men. He is the Saviour of the angels from the moment of their creation; He is the Saviour of men from the moment of His incarnation.

"His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb," "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand"; and the same Word announced by the Prophet as about to be "abridged," is more clearly stated in the Gospel to have been made flesh. This, my brethren, is a parable, and has reference to ourselves. For Christ has no need of testimony from either

angels or men, but, as the Apostle says, "all things (are) for the sake of the elect." We are instructed, therefore, to seek a threefold witness of our own salvation, lest perhaps we should seem to have taken the name of our God in vain. For we also, brethren, must endure to be circumcised, in order to receive the name of salvation.* We must be circumcised, I say, yet not according to the letter but "in spirit and in truth," not in one part only, but in the whole body; because the concupiscence which comes from the original transgression and has to be cut away, is not confined to any single member, but reigns throughout the flesh. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness" in us. No part of our body has escaped the infection of this poison. Consequently, although the chosen people, whilst it was as yet but little in faith and love, had enjoined on it a partial circumcision suited to its weakness; now, when it has increased unto the fulness of perfect manhood, it is commanded to be baptised in its whole body, which may be regarded as a circumcision of the entire man. Hence it is that the Saviour vouchsafed to undergo the Jewish circumcision on the eighth day (when He was still only a Little One) and after His thirtieth year allowed Himself to be crucified, by which every part of His Body was racked with pain. And according to the Apostle,

* The meaning is, that as the name of salvation (Jesus) was given to the Child in the presence of three witnesses, the Angel, Mary, and Joseph, and given on earth only after His circumcision: so too before we can presume to take to ourselves this name, that is, before we can consider ourselves to be of the saved, we must undergo a moral circumcision, and have testimony in our favour from three witnesses, from our brethren, from our superiors, and from Christ Himself, the Angel of the great Counsel, speaking in the conscience.—(Translator.)

" we have been planted together in the likeness of His death," by our obedience to the law imposing the new circumcision.

What else, therefore, is our moral circumcision except that which the Apostle recommends to us where he says, " Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content " ? Assuredly we are well circumcised by our voluntary poverty, which cuts away everything superfluous, by our penitential labours, by our observance of regular discipline. But, as I have said, in this moral circumcision, we have to seek a threefold testimony of our salvation, from the Angel, from Mary, and from Joseph. It is necessary first and before all that the " Angel of the great counsel " should impose on us the name of salvation. We have need, secondly, of the testimony of the community in which we live, and which is, as it were, the mother of each of us, but a virgin mother, like unto her whom St. Paul " espoused to one Husband " and presented " as a chaste virgin to Christ." Nor, in the third place, must he who desires to follow the Saviour's example, neglect the testimony of His minister. For the latter represents Joseph, and holds the place of the Bridegroom, yet only as His servant and steward ; Joseph is called the father of Christ, but is really nothing more than His guardian.

I will endeavour to put this more clearly. It is necessary for us, my brethren, to have good testimony, both from those who are without and from Him Who is within. Now, the religious whose conversation is agreeable to all and offensive to none has undoubtedly the testimony of the entire brotherhood in favour of his salvation. So far as regards external conduct, it

will be useless for the wicked " accuser of the brethren " to cite him to judgment whose innocence is attested by the whole community. From his superiors also he has good testimony, whosoever, having a sincere determination to follow their directions, faithfully exposes for their judgment in a candid and humble confession the sins he has been guilty of whilst he lived in the world, as well as the faults committed in the cloister. " For in many things we all offend," unless we consider ourselves holier than the disciple whom Jesus loved. Concerning sins thus manifested there is no longer any cause for uneasiness, because the Lord will not judge again what has already been pronounced upon. But perhaps the accuser will attempt to impute evil to our intentions, and endeavour to calumniate us in a matter as to which the testimony alike of our spiritual father and of our brethren shall appear of little avail. For this, therefore, we have need of an internal Witness, Who looks rather to the heart than to the face. And evidently we must begin with this internal Witness, so that we shall conceive nothing in our souls until it has first received from Him the name of salvation. But when that which has been conceived in the mind issues forth into external action, it is necessary that it should also obtain good testimony for itself from those who are without. " For we provide what may be good," says the Apostle, " not only before God but also before men."

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION.

On the Manner in which the Name of Jesus has been poured out in the Saviour's other Titles.

"And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb."—Luke ii. 21.

"And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace. His Empire shall be multiplied and there shall be no end of peace."—Is. ix. 6-7.

From the beginning, my brethren, God has shown His predilection for order, and nothing out of order has ever been acceptable to Him Whose very Essence is order. Hence it is that not only has He, as Creator, "ordered all things in measure and number and weight," but He also prescribed an order to be observed by man, and gave him a precept, saying to Adam, "Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." A most easy commandment surely, and a most ample liberty. Nevertheless, man refused to observe the order thus established, but transgressed the limits appointed him. Therefore God turned away His Face from him; and only in the days of His friend Abraham did He begin to grow propitious again. At that time He instituted another order, and promulgated another law, but a law and an order altogether unlike the preceding. For whereas the first law was preventive, the second was remedial; by the first man was forbidden to admit

anything superfluous, the second commanded him to cut off and remove from him the superfluities already admitted; the first concerned the tree of knowledge and forbade its fruit to be eaten, the second related to the human body, the flesh whereof it ordered to be circumcised.

And although this circumcision was confined to one part of the flesh, it cannot be doubted that the Leviathan of concupiscence had spread its poison throughout the whole body, and had infected the entire man with an inordinate and insatiable passion for pleasure. Nevertheless, because our human fragility, and in particular the tender delicacy of a new-born babe, could not endure a universal circumcision, the Lord in His loving-kindness was content with a partial. The eighth day after birth was appointed for the ceremony. This fact of itself held out a hope of the heavenly kingdom, inasmuch as the returning circle of the week seemed to represent a crown. It is for this reason that we celebrate with special solemnity the octave day after each of the principal festivals. And in the Lord's sermon on the mount, the eighth beatitude, as you may have noticed, is united to the first, so that we have the same obvious suggestion of a crown in the repeated promise of the kingdom of heaven.

Very properly, therefore, did the Child Who was born for us receive the name of Jesus, that is, Saviour, at the time of His circumcision; because it was then He began the work of our salvation, by pouring out the first instalment of His immaculate Blood. Christians surely have no need to be told the reason why our Lord Jesus Christ willed to be circumcised. He

was circumcised for the same reason for which He was born and for which He died. None of these things was for His own sake, but "all for the sake of the elect." He was not conceived in sin, He was not circumcised because of sin, neither did He suffer death for sins of His own, because He had none, but for our sins. "His name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb." It was *called*, but not *given*. For Jesus has been His name from everlasting. To be a Saviour is a property of His Nature : He owes this title to His own Divine Essence, not to any creature, angelic or human.

But, my brethren, how shall we explain the fact that the illustrious Prophet who predicted the various names that would belong to this Child, appears to have passed over just that one by which alone He was called, as the Angel foretold and as the Evangelist bears witness? Isaias rejoiced "that he might see this day; he saw it and was glad." He saw it, I say, because full of gratitude and praising God, he cried out, "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace." Great names, no doubt, are all these. But where is that name which is above every name, at which "every knee shall bow"? Where is the name of Jesus? Perhaps we shall find it distributed in a manner, and poured out in these others. For it is of this name—Jesus—that the Spouse says in the Canticle of love, "Thy name is as oil poured out."*

* The subject is discussed at greater length in Sermon XV on the Canticle of Canticles.—(Translator.)

Yes, my brethren, so it is. We have the name Jesus contained in a state of solution, so to speak, amongst all the other titles mentioned by the Prophet.* And if He lacked any one of these He could neither be, nor be called, a Saviour, that is, Jesus. But have we not each of us found Him truly admirable in the transformation He has accomplished in our wills? For that was the beginning of our salvation, when we began to hate what we used to love, to lament what we used to delight in, to embrace what we used to fear, to pursue what we used to fly from, and to desire what we used to loathe. Admirable surely He must be Who has wrought such wonders in us. But it is necessary that He should likewise show Himself our Counsellor, so as to direct us in the practice of penance and in the ordering of our lives, lest otherwise our zeal should be without knowledge, and our good will without discretion. He must, in the next place, manifest Himself as our God, by pardoning the sins of the past, because otherwise He cannot be our Saviour; and no one can forgive sin save God alone. Yet not even this will suffice for our salvation, unless He also proves Himself mighty in "overthrowing them that fight against us." For if the same evil passions prevail over us again, our "last state" shall undoubtedly "be worse that our first." Does He now need anything more in order that He may be our Saviour? Yes, my brethren. That is still wanting to Him which is the most important of all, namely, to be the "Father

* For a fuller treatment of this subject and for further evidence of the Saint's devotion to the name of Jesus, cf. Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, vol. i. pp. 136-7. See also the translation of the beautiful and famous Hymn to the Holy Name at the end of this volume.—(Translator.)

of the world to come," so that He may beget unto life everlasting those who have been begotten unto death by their fathers in this world. But to merit the name of Jesus, there is one thing more necessary: as "Prince of Peace" He must reconcile us to the Father to Whom He is at last to deliver up the kingdom, as the Apostle declares. Then in truth "His empire shall be multiplied," so that the very multitude of the redeemed shall entitle Him to the name of Saviour; "and there shall be no end of peace," so that the permanence of their peace shall be to the saved an evidence of the truth of their salvation.

SERMON FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION.

On the Eight mystical Days of the Soul's progress.

"*And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*"—Luke ii. 21.

In the circumcision of the Lord, my brethren, there is something that claims our love, something that excites our wonder, and something too that calls for our imitation. Manifest in that mystery is the unspeakable grace of the divine condescension; and for this we give thanks; but there is also something concealed in it which we are expected to fulfil in ourselves. For the Lord Jesus came not only to redeem us by shedding His most precious Blood, but also to instruct us by word and example. As it would be of little use for us to know the way home, if we were kept chained in prison, so likewise redemption from bondage would have availed us nothing, were we left in ignorance of the way, and liable to be led back to captivity by the first person who chanced to meet us. At a riper age the Saviour will give us manifest examples of patience, humility, and of the various other virtues, but, above all, of charity; the same virtues are now exhibited in His infancy, although veiled as yet under figures and types.

But before entering upon a discussion of these, it

will be well to say something on the great and visible condescension whereby the Lord of glory became man and suffered for us. The angels have a glory pure and perfect, but neither are we ourselves left altogether without glory. For even now "we see His glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only-Begotten of the Father," the glory of mercy and of an affection truly paternal, the glory of Him Who, proceeding from the Bosom of the Father, reveals to us what is indeed a fatherly Heart. "For all have sinned," as the Apostle says, "and do need the glory of God." And in another place he exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." For what could be a greater glory to us than the fact that God has esteemed us so highly as to endure the cross for our salvation? Or what greater glory can He have Himself than the glory of this condescension, of this loving-kindness, which is all the more sweet because so entirely gratuitous? For He "died for the ungodly," as St. Paul bears witness. Consider, then, my brethren, how much He has suffered, and for whom He has suffered. Consider for whom He has suffered that you may not become proud; and how much He has suffered that you may not despair. And in order that we may be found to "have received, not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit That is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God," let us "not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding," but rather like beasts in the pious sense, after the example of him who says, "I am become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee." For beasts of this kind know their "Owner" and their "Master's crib," in which He

Himself, Who is the *Bread* of angels, is offered *them* for their food as sweetest hay. He is the Living Bread on Which man ought to live. But since man is " compared to senseless beasts and made like to them," the Bread has become Hay, so that even thus he might live thereon.

The mystery of this change is celebrated on the day of the nativity, because it was then the Word was made flesh, and we know that " all flesh is grass." On that day, consequently, " He was made a little less than the angels " and was " in habit found as a man." But to-day I hear of something still more marvellous. I hear now that He has been made, not a little, but a great deal less than the angels, by assuming not only the form of a man, but even the form of a sinner, and by allowing Himself to be branded as a criminal. For what is circumcision save an indication of superfluity and sin ? But, O Lord Jesus, what can be superfluous in Thee and needing to be cut away ? Art not Thou true God of God the Father, and true Man, born immaculate of a Virgin Mother ? And you who circumcise Him, what are you about ? Do you suppose that this Child falls under the law commanding that " the male who shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people " ? Can the Father forget the Son of His own Bosom ? Or shall He be unable to recognise Him unless He bears the mark of circumcision ? But surely, if there could be anything that might conceivably prevent Him from recognising the Son in Whom He is always well pleased, it would be the fact of finding in Him this sign of circumcision, which He has prescribed for transgressors as a remedy for sin. Nevertheless it is nothing wonderful that the

Head receives for the members the medicine which It does not need for Itself. Even with regard to our own bodies, does it not sometimes happen that when the ailing part is too tender the medicament is applied to another? Thus, the head is sick, and the poultice is put on the arm; the reins are distempered, and it is the leg that is doctored. In the same manner here, the remedy for the corruption of the whole mystical body is applied to the Head.

And what wonder that the Lord should condescend to be circumcised for us for whom He refused not to die? He has given Himself to me wholly and is wholly expended for my profit. For I was a captive. And hearing that the Son of the Great King was passing before my prison-house, I raised my voice in groans and lamentations, piteously calling out, "Son of God, have mercy on me." He, in accordance with His native benignity, stopped and inquired the meaning of the sobbing and weeping which he heard. His companions made answer, saying to Him, "This is the traitor Adam whom Thy Father has ordered to be kept in close confinement until He decides by what torments he is to be put to death." What now will the Prince do, Whose nature is goodness, and "to Whom it is proper to have pity always and to spare"? He descends into my dungeon, He comes down in order to lead forth the poor thrall from the place of his captivity. But the Jews, ever mindful of the hatred wherewith they hate His Father, take this opportunity to vent it on the Son. Hence He says of them Himself, "They have hated both Me and My Father." What then will these wicked men do to Him, the mere sight of Whom they cannot bear? "This is the Heir," they

whisper to each other, "let us kill Him and we shall have His inheritance." Accordingly they slew the Lamb of God, to their own destruction, but to our salvation. For they indeed shed the Blood of the Lamb, yet used It not for their own profit, whilst we hastened forward and drank It. We took the "chalice of salvation," that "chalice which inebriateth, how goodly it is!" This is the cause of our thanksgiving. Not many days ago we celebrated the descent of the Son of God into the prison of this world, I refer to the feast of the nativity; and to-day is kept holy in honour of the mystery of humiliation whereby He took upon Himself our fetters and chains. For on this day He Who "did no sin" put His own Hands in manacles in order to deliver the guilty: the Lawgiver Himself was "made under the law."

But I have next to explain to you how in this circumcision there is mystically indicated something which we must do ourselves, and what that something is. For not without reason was it prescribed in the law that the ceremony of circumcision should be performed on the eighth day, and not without reason was this law fulfilled in the incarnate Word. But "who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" May the Holy Spirit Who "searcheth the deep things of God," invoked by your prayers, be propitious to our desires, and vouchsafe to reveal to us the mystery of this eighth day. We are not unaware that "unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," since it was in order to render this new birth possible for us that the Only-Begotten of the Father willed to be born a second time. For we have all been born in sin, and consequently require to

be re-born in grace. This gift of divine grace we received at our baptism, but alas! we lost all its benefit during our life in the world. Now for the first time, through the mercy of God, the power of grace is operating in us in such a manner as to enable us to "walk in newness of life." Therefore I may say that then a man is spiritually born, when the Divine Sun of Justice, rising in his soul, illuminates the darkness of his sins, manifests to his interior eye the terrors of God's judgment, and, to establish him securely in holy fear, reveals to him the shortness of the present life and the uncertainty of its ending. This is manifestly the "evening" in which according to the Psalmist, "weeping shall have place." But it must be followed by the gladness of that morning whereof the same Prophet says to God, "Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning." Thus "there is evening and morning one day." Now this is the day of justice, when to everyone is attributed that which belongs to him; mercy to God, and misery to man. It is the day in which, as I have said, the child of grace is brought forth spiritually, whilst in the manner and by the means just mentioned our hearts are moved to a love of penance and a hatred of sin.

But we are in danger of relapsing if we desire perchance to do penance amidst the distractions of the world, where some will endeavour to entice us to sin by evil counsels, others by worse examples; some by their flattery will tempt us to vainglory, and others by their slanders will provoke us to impatience. It is necessary, therefore, that the light of prudence should shine upon us. By the illumination of this virtue, we shall perceive how many and how perilous are the

opportunities and occasions of evil which the world provides, particularly in the present generation; and how weak are our souls for resisting the same, above all, if we have been living hitherto in habits of sin. Accordingly, my brethren, we should determine in this day of prudence to flee away out of the world and its wickedness, saying with the Psalmist, "I have hated the assembly of the malignant, and with the wicked I will not sit." But not even now are we entirely secure from self-deception. For perhaps we shall feel inclined to choose a desert solitude, not weighing sufficiently our own infirmity and the risk of engaging the devil in single combat. For what can be so full of peril as to attempt to fight alone against the craft of the ancient enemy, to whom we are visible, whereas he is invisible to us? Hence we have need of another day, the day of fortitude, in the light of which we shall perceive that it is "unto God our fortitude must be guarded" and that it must be sought in the company of many who are fighting side by side. For there we shall have as many helpers as comrades, who can say with St. Paul, "We are not ignorant of his—namely, Satan's—devices." A community like this is in its fortitude "terrible as an army set in battle array." But "woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up." We read, it is true, of some of the ancient fathers, how they received the call and the grace to live in solitude. Nevertheless, no one ought to expose himself rashly to the many dangers incident to this manner of life, no one ought to tempt God. Hence our master, St. Benedict, describes the anchorites as men, "who, not in the first fervour of the religious

life, but after long probation in the monastery, have learned by the help and experience of others to fight against the devil." * Consequently, in this day of fortitude we may add to what we said in the preceding day of prudence, namely, " I have hated the assembly of the malignant, and with the wicked I will not sit," these other words which follow in the same psalm, " I will wash my hands among the innocent."

But when one elects to live in the society of many brethren, surely he who has not yet been a disciple does not wish to be at once made a master, and to teach what he has never learned. For being untrained in the ways of the spirit, how should he be able to curb the irrational movements of his own mind or of the minds of others? As the Apostle says, " No man ever hateth his own flesh." If then such a one becomes his own master, how can you doubt that he will sometimes indulge himself too easily, and that the more because he is able to do it unobserved? The day of temperance, therefore, must dawn for him, so that he may study how to bridle and restrain the irregular motions of carnal concupiscence, the purposeless motions of unreasonable curiosity, and the rebellious motions of stiff-necked pride. He must, like David, " choose to be an abject in the house of the Lord," and to be subject to a master, by whom his will shall be broken and his wantonness checked by the curb of obedience. Then shall he be able to say to God with the same Prophet, " Thou hast placed men over our heads." Nor ought he to consider as unworthy of him such submission of which the Lord has given us an example in His own

* Holy Rule, chap. i. Cf. Sermon LXIV on the Canticle of Canticles.

Person, because "the disciple is not above his Master." For when Jesus had advanced "in wisdom and age and grace with God and man," being now twelve years old, He remained behind in Jerusalem; but having been found by the holy Virgin and His reputed father, St. Joseph, "in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions," "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." Therefore, do thou also, my brother, be subject to thy superiors for His sake.

But perhaps even now, when thou art in the way of obedience, thou shalt meet with trials that are painful and hard to endure. Thou shalt sometimes perhaps have commands laid upon thee, which, although they are good and salutary, may nevertheless seem harsh. Now if thou beginnest to submit to these with an ill-humour, to criticise thy superior, to murmur in the secret of thy heart, even though thou shouldst outwardly fulfil what is enjoined, *that* is not true obedience, but rather a cloak for malice.* Consequently, thou art still in want of the day of patience, which shall enable thee to embrace with a tranquil mind everything hard and disagreeable, condemning and sharply reproving thyself because of thy disrelish for things so salutary, and in thy thoughts always taking the side of the superior against thyself, endeavouring always and in all things —so far as it may be possible—to excuse him and to blame thyself.

But at this stage thou shalt need, as I think, to be on thy guard against pride. For to have thus overcome thyself is certainly no small achievement. "The patient man," says Solomon, "is better than the

* Cf. Holy Rule of St. Benedict, chap. v.

valiant; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities." Observe how manifestly the Royal Prophet teaches us that humility is necessary after patience, when he says, "But be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from Him is my patience." Does it not seem from this that his very patience became for him an occasion of temptation to pride? It is therefore necessary that the day of humility should enlighten thy heart and show thee plainly what thou art of thyself and what thou owest to the grace of God, so that thou mayest not be high-minded. For, as St. James bears witness, "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble."

And when thou hast been long exercised in these virtues, pray now that the light of devotion may be granted thee, that most serene day, that sabbath of the soul, in which, like a soldier honourably discharged thou mayest live without labour in the midst of all labour, and deserve to have applied to thee the words of the Psalmist, "I have run the way of Thy commandments when Thou didst enlarge my heart." Then thou shalt discover an ineffable sweetness and delight in those very practices which in the beginning thou wert wont to go through with bitterness and repugnance of mind.* This, unless I mistake, is the grace David is pleading for where he cries out, "Oh, forgive me that I may be refreshed." As if he should say, "How long shall I be afflicted with this labour and sorrow? Until when

* "This path (of perfection) is indeed narrow in the beginning; but when thou shalt have advanced therein, and grown strong in faith, thy heart shall be enlarged, and thou shalt run in the way of God's commandments with that unspeakable delight which charity imparts to the soul."—Preface to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict (Mount Melleray Translation).

shall death pursue me all the day long? Oh, forgive me that I may be refreshed!" But it seems to me that only a few attain during the present life to this degree of perfection. And even if one sometimes discovers in himself probable signs of his having arrived thus far, he must not be too ready to believe it, particularly if he is a novice and has not yet passed through all the preceding degrees. For Jesus Christ, our most loving-kind Lord, is wont to attract such beginners with graces of peace and consolation similar to those enjoyed by the perfect. But persons thus favoured should know that these graces are rather *lent* to them than *given*, in order that "in the day of good things (they) may not be unmindful of evils, and in the day of evils (they) may not be unmindful of good things." Far different is the manner according to which souls well practised in virtue are allowed to enjoy the sweetness of heavenly consolation. But, as I have said, there are many who never in their whole lives attain to this happy state. Such as these may rest assured that if they continue their efforts with all devotion and perseverance, they shall obtain, at least in the moment after death, that which during life was withheld from them for their good. For then the grace of God alone, without any co-operation on their part, will advance them in an instant to that point, which with the assistance of the same grace they have been so long and so vainly struggling to reach. Thus "made perfect in a short space," they shall "fulfil a long time."

Now, as for those who have attained to this grace of devotion, there is, as I think, one more danger lying in their way. They have need to be on their guard against the "noon-day devil." "For Satan

himself," as the Apostle tells us, " transformeth himself into an angel of light." This, then, is a danger to be feared by such as discharge all their duties with sensible devotion: following their attraction, they may injure their health by indiscreet austerities, and thus be obliged—not without much spiritual loss—to occupy themselves with the care of a weakened body. Consequently he who would run without danger of falling must be enlightened by the day of discretion, which is the mother of virtues, and the crown of perfection. By discretion we are taught to avoid excess in everything: and this is the eighth day in which the child is circumcised. For discretion truly circumcises, by keeping us between the extremes of too much and too little. He who exceeds rather cuts off than circumcises the fruit of a good work; and the same is true of him who through sloth is deficient. In this eighth day, accordingly, the name is imposed, and it is the name of salvation, viz., Jesus. Nor have I any hesitation in saying that whoso lives in the practice of the above-mentioned virtues is indeed a Jesus, a saviour, and is working out the salvation of his own soul. Until this day of discretion none but the angels, the confidants of God's secrets, have been able to call him by this saving name, which I now give him for the first time, yet with all security. Nevertheless, since such perfection is a very rare bird on earth * let obedience stand to you, my brethren, in place of discretion,† so that you shall do nothing more, nothing less, nothing otherwise than has been commanded.

* " Rara ista avis in terra," quoted from the poet Juvenal, Sat. vi.—(Translator.)

† It was a saying of St. Ignatius of Loyola that " discretion is for superiors, obedience for inferiors."—(Translator.)

ST. BERNARD'S HYMN TO THE NAME OF JESUS.

"Jubilus Rhythmicus Sancti Bernardi."

I

The very thought of Jesus thrills
With transports sweet this heart of mine,
But oh! what joy, what rapture fills
The soul that sees His Face divine!

II

No sweeter sound can soothe the ear,
The voice no sweeter song can sing,
No sweeter thought the soul can cheer,
Than Jesus, Son of heaven's King.

III

Jesus, the sinner's hope of grace,
To all who ask how loving kind!
How good to all who seek Thy Face!
But what, oh, what to them that find!

IV

O Jesus, sweetness of my heart,
The Fount of life, and light, and love,
To me the joy of joys Thou art,
A joy all hope and thought above.

V

Nor tongue nor pen can ever tell,
How eloquent soe'er they be,
'Tis only he that loves Thee well
Can know the joy of loving Thee.

VI

I'll seek Him where He loves to hide,
Within the cloister of my breast,
I'll seek at home, I'll seek outside,
I'll seek with love that cannot rest.

VII

With Mary, at the dawn of day,
I'll seek the tomb where Jesus lies,
In spirit, not with eyes of clay,
Lamenting with love's plaintive cries.

VIII

My tears upon the stone shall beat,
My sobs and groans shall fill the place,
I'll cast me down at Jesus' Feet
And clasp them close in fond embrace.

IX

How good a King our Jesus is!
How great a Conqueror of hell!
All beautiful whate'er is His
And sweet beyond my power to tell.

X

Stay with us still, Lord Jesus, stay,
To guide our steps life's desert through;
Drive from our souls all mists away,
And let Thy love the world subdue.

XI

The sun of truth shines bright and clear
Within the soul where Thou art guest;
How vile the things of earth appear
When Thy sweet love inflames the breast!

XII

The love of Jesus brings delight
And ravishment exceeding great,
Its tenderness no man aright,
Though thousand-tongued, can celebrate.

XIII

His Passion is a proof of this,
His streaming Wounds attest the same,
Whereby He bought us heaven's bliss
And saved us from the vengeful flame.

XIV

Acknowledge Jesus, mortals all,
The grace to love Him boldly claim,
With fervour seek Him, great and small,
And let the search your hearts inflame.

XV

Yea, love Him Who so loveth you,
Let love's debt liquidated be,
Give love for love and so pursue
The odour of His charity.

XVI

O Jesus, Source of clemency,
Our only joy and hope Thou art;
All grace and sweetness flows from Thee,
The true delight of every heart.

XVII

Jesus, my Treasure, let me feel
The fullest force of love divine,
Oh, let me in Thy presence kneel
And see the glory that is Thine!

XVIII

I cannot speak in worthy wise
Of Thee, yet shall not silent be;
The will and daring love supplies,
For all my soul is set on Thee.

XIX

Thy love, O Lord, is mystic meat,
Which brings no weariness to the mind;
It fills us with refreshment sweet,
Yet leaves the hunger still behind.

XX

For he that eats Thee hungers still,
Who drinks Thee feels intenser thirst,
One only good attracts his will:
With him 'tis Jesus last and first.

XXI

How Jesus savours none can tell
But he whom love possesses whole;
How blest who Jesus loves so well
That all things else disgust his soul!

XXII

O Jesus, name to angels dear,
As honey in the mouth Thou art,
As sweetest music in the ear,
As heavenly nectar in the heart.

XXIII

I'm weary waiting, Jesus mine,
Thy coming; when, when shall it be?
When shall Thy Face upon me shine?
When shall my soul be filled with Thee?

XXIV

Thy love which ever in me lives,
With languor constant grieves the mind,
But joyous is the pledge it gives
Of life, by limits none confined.

XXV

O Jesus, boundlessly benign!
O Goodness inexpressible!
Let love my heart unite with Thine
Who canst alone its hunger still.

XXVI

How good to love and seek Thee, yea,
And for Thy sake all else disown!
To die to self, that so I may,
Sweet Jesus, live for Thee alone!

XXVII

O Jesus, sweetness over all,
The love-sick's soul one remedy,
These tears of love upon Thee call,
My inmost heart cries out for Thee.

XXVIII

For Thee I pine in every place,
And languish for Thy presence sweet.
What bliss whene'er I see Thy Face!
What joy when I may clasp Thy Feet!

XXIX

Then such caresses, such delights
As make all other savours sour!
For Jesus then Himself unites
To me for one too short-lived hour.

XXX

What long I've sought I now can see,
I've reached the goal of my desire ;
I languish, Lord, with love of Thee,
And all my soul seems set on fire.

XXXI

When love divine to this attains,
No passion can oppose its sway,
It never dies, it never wanes,
But stronger grows from day to day.

XXXII

Thy love, O Jesus, ne'er can lose
Its heat, but burns for ever bright ;
Its savour, wondrous sweet, imbues
And fills the soul with pure delight.

XXXIII

This love, descending from the pole,
Abides in me, a welcome guest,
It sets on fire my very soul,
And makes a heaven in my breast.

XXXIV

O happy flame of charity !
O blissful ardour of desire !
O love of God's sweet Son ! In thee
Is shelter safe from passion's fire.

XXXV

O Virgin's Offspring, Jesus mine!
My sole delight and dearest love!
To Thee be praise and power divine,
Be Thine the kingdom bright above!

XXXVI

Come, come, Lord Jesus, best of kings,
A brighter radiance on me cast;
Come, Source whence light eternal springs,
So long desired, come, come at last.

XXXVII

Thy brightness, Jesus, shames the sun,
No fragrance can with Thine compete,
Thy loveliness the palm hath won,
Than sweetness' self Thou art more sweet.

XXXVIII

Thy savour, Lord, gives such delight,
Thy perfume is so sweet withal,
My love-sick soul longs for the sight
Of Thee, Who art her all in all.

XXXIX

For Thou love's consummation art,
The bliss and sunshine of my mind,
The pride and glory of my heart,
O Jesus, Saviour of mankind.

XL

Reseat Thee at the Father's Right,
Beloved Lord, Thy work is done;
Thy foes Thou hast subdued with might,
And now enjoy the kingdom won.

XLI

Yet we can never parted be,
For Thou hast stolen away my heart:
Go where Thou wilt, I'll follow Thee,
Sweet Lord, who all my glory art.

XLII

Lift up your gates and run to meet,
Ye angels all, your King and mine;
And thus the glorious Victor greet:
"Hail Jesus, hail our King divine."

XLIII

Great King of glory, Lord of might,
Immortal Conqueror of hell,
Sole Splendour of the land of light,
And Giver of all grace as well;

XLIV

Yea, mercy's never-failing source,
Eternal Brightness of the blest:
Drive clouds and sadness from our course
And let Thy light upon us rest.

XLV

The angels with unwearying voice
Shall sing Thy praises evermore,
For that Thou didst the world rejoice
And peace 'twixt God and man restore.

XLVI

The Prince of peace is Jesus mine,
Of peace no mind can comprehend;
For this my soul shall ever pine,
To this do all her strivings tend.

XLVII

Our Jesus has the skies resought,
To rule as King o'er friends and foes,
And my poor heart has with Him brought,
Which follows Him where'er He goes.

XLVIII

Oh, let us honour Him with prayer,
With praise, and vows, and hymns of love,
That through His mercy we may share
His glory in the realms above.

Printed by Browne and Nolan, Ltd., Dublin.

3495

208.29
B457
v.1

St. Bernard's sermons
for the seasons...

DATE	ISSUED TO
	DEC 8 1977

208.29
B457
v.1

3495